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November 19, 1896.

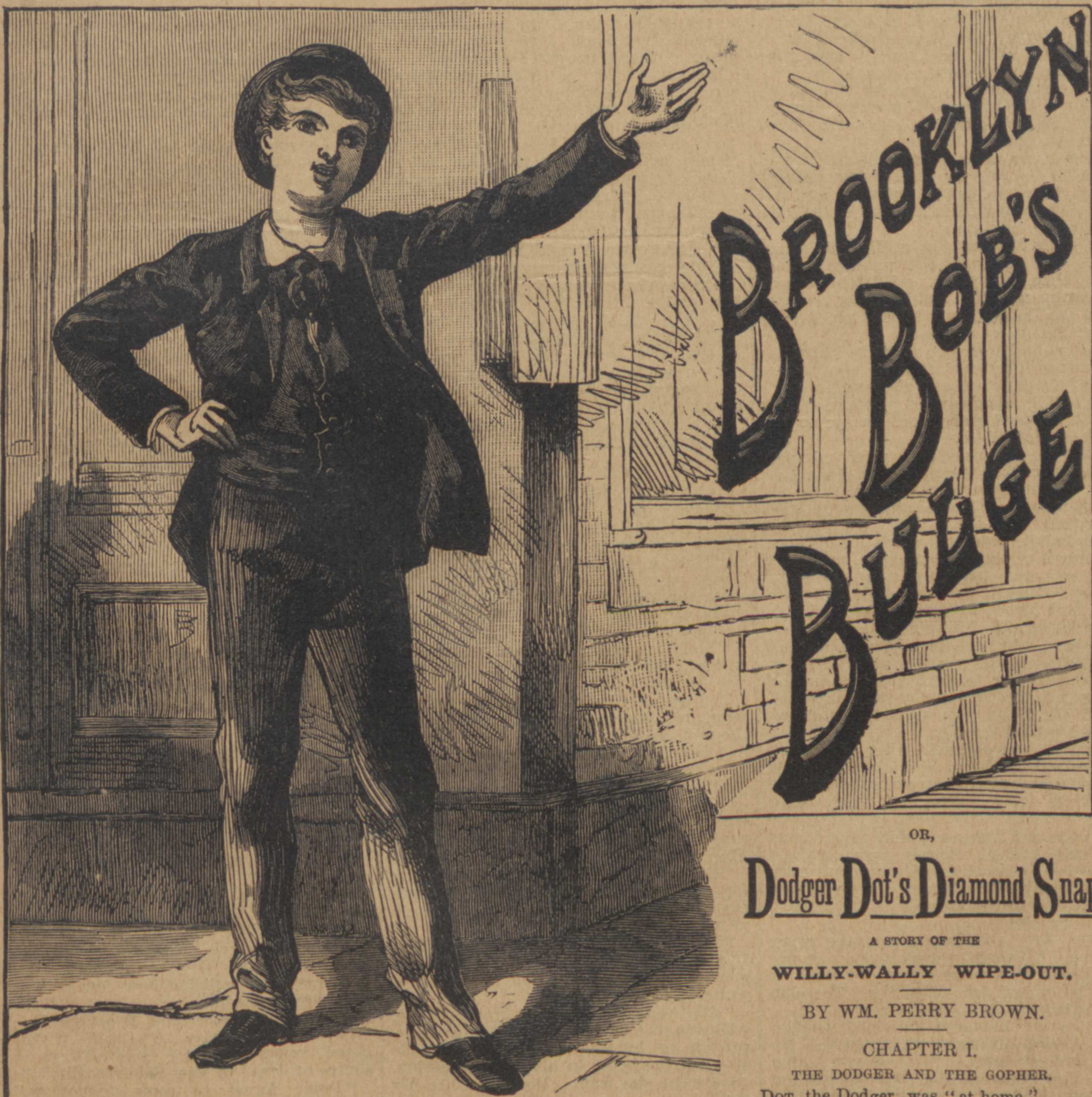
No. 956.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 cents.

Vol. XXXVII.



OR,

Dodger Dot's Diamond Snap.

A STORY OF THE

WILLY-WALLY WIPE-OUT.

BY WM. PERRY BROWN.

CHAPTER I.

THE DODGER AND THE GOPHER.

Dot, the Dodger, was "at home."

As chief and director of a gang of river rats and gamin toughs, he had questioned

"I HALF EXPECTED TO GET ON TRACK OF THE STONES," SAID BILLY, STRIKING AN ATTITUDE.

them and sent them off on their several assignments—as spotters, spies and reporters for crooks, who paid them for any information which might lead up to a good “strike” or lucky “lay.”

The room which was their rendezvous and the Dodger's lodgings, was in an East Side rookery, half-tenement and half-lodging house, and among whose motley denizens were to be found, at all times, a considerable number of suspects and “shifters,” on whom the police and headquarters shadowers kept a wary eye.

The apartment had no outer window—no light except that of the dirty kerosene lamp, perched on a packing case in one corner, nearly opposite the one door opening out into the dark corridor that led to the stairway.

The door was the only source of entrance and of ventilation, as well, save the air shaft on one side, in which ran a dumb-waiter or lift for the series of dark rooms in the dingy and ill-favored house.

Having dismissed his spies, the jauntily dressed Dodger proceeded to doff his nobby business suit, which he tossed into a trunk, and to draw from another trunk a grimy suit, which he donned at once, thus changing his appearance completely.

The more perfectly to make this change effective, Dot proceeded to smear his face, tousle his hair, and then to cover his head with a very rusty felt hat.

This done, the dude of sixteen was transformed into the street arab or roustabout longshoreman of uncertain age, and drawing from amidst his rags a fine gold watch, he muttered:

“Nearly four, an’ Gopher Pete ain’t here yet. Well, I’ll wait five minutes more—d’en, if he don’t show up I’ll take care of the swag myself,” and, lighting a cigarette, the Dodger flung himself on the one bed of the room to wait.

But a shadower even there had him under surveillance, for after the boys passed out of the dark hall and disappeared down the half-lit stairway, a youthful figure glided forward and placed an eye to the keyhole of the door.

Thus he remained for some minutes, witnessing the Dodger's transformation and seemingly understanding that the young crook had an appointment with some pal.

That the shadower, youth as he was, had come to play a dangerous and sharp role, was soon made apparent, for when Dot cast himself upon the bed, and, with face half turned to the wall, proceeded to blow the smoke of his cigarette upward in a dreamy way, the door was noiselessly pressed open, the watcher glided silently in, bending low to the floor, and making his way to the big packing case, on which stood the lamp, almost instantly disappeared behind the box.

Five minutes elapsed. Then the boy on the bed sat up, threw away the stub of his cigarette and uttered an exclamation.

“Holly gee! Who left that door open?”

He rose and went to shut it, when it was suddenly pushed entirely open, and in walked a heavy-browed, muscular man, rather loudly, though nicely, dressed man who looked warily around.

“Alone, Dot?”

“Yes, Pete. I thought you was never coming. Let's get to work and count out, divvy and stow away. Some of the kids may be in any time after five. The club meets here to-night, too.”

“Blast the kids and the club!” Gopher Pete looked disgusted as he locked the door and sat down. “Wot do you bother with these buzzers and swipe-lifters for, anyhow, Dodger? I've said before, that you have the making of a first-class, all-around man yourself.”

“I make money by 'em, see?” and Dot proceeded to light another cigarette.

The shadow behind the packing case began to look uneasily at the now locked door.

“Look what hauls we make!” said Gopher Pete. “Twenty thousand when we cracked the Fourth National. Half of it was mine.”

“And you blew it in in about three months. That ain't my way. Bet ye'r life I salts away part of what I lags, for hard times.”

“You orter, if you depends on leathers and the like. That haul of diamonds, now. Don't that beat six months of what the gang does with all their buzzin', swipin' and sneakin'?”

“That was a good haul, Pete.” Dot's eyes snapped greedily. “It's d'e only big one I ever helped in, as you say. Perhaps I'll be pards with you yet. But let's get to work. We'll see how these diamonds pans out; then, mebbe you and I will make another strike together.”

The two arose and proceeded to make a search of the room, more for the sake of precautionary habit than from any suspicion of their being overheard or seen.

Presently, after both rogues became assured that their surroundings were as private as they appeared to be, the Dodger unlocked a large iron-bound chest which stood on one side of the room, disclosing inside another smaller box, also locked. Then Pete produced a key and opened the second one, extracting therefrom a chammois-skin bag, partially filled with something that rattled as it was moved.

“Here we are at last!” said the Dodger, as Pete opened the bag and poured out on the table what appeared to be a stream of blue and white fire in the gleam cast by the lamp. “Ain't they beauts, Gopher?”

The shadow, peering over the edge of the packing case, saw a sight so overpoweringly beautiful that he rose noiselessly and bent eagerly forward as the two thieves sat gloating over their spoil.

At that juncture there sounded a startling knock on the door.

CHAPTER II.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING.

Down sank the shadow out of sight as Pete and the Dodger sprang to their feet. The young crook began hustling several handfuls of diamonds back into the bag. There were stones of various weights, from the size of a pinhead to that of a small bird's egg. The collection was a flashing dream of brilliant color.

“There's a cool fifty thousand dollars' worth, Dot,” whispered Pete. “In with 'em—quick!”

The jewels were hastily thrown into the large iron chest. Before Dot could turn the key the door was pushed open and a fine-looking young woman entered, dressed after the manner of a Grand Street shopping girl.

“Oh, Dot,” she exclaimed, eagerly, while both man and lad scowled at the interruption. “I was afraid you wouldn't be in. That you, Pete?”

“Course it's me. D'is is a pretty way for gals to do, ain't it? Breakin' into boy's rooms with out invitation. What do ye mean, anyhow, Kate?”

“What do I mean? I wanted to see Dot. If you don't like that you can skip out yourself, Gopher Pete! I'm no friend of yours, thank goodness!”

“All the better for me,” growled Pete, who was in a nasty temper over the interruption, as he was anxious to have his share of the booty in his own possession. “See what she wants, Dot, then fire her out.”

“Fire her out!” sneered Kate, as she drew Dot into the corner nearest the pack-

ing case. “Look here, Dot,” she said, in a low tone, though her words were overheard by the hidden shadow. “The trick is out. Brooklyn Bob is on your trail!”

“What?” The Dodger looked startled, but instantly recovered. “D'at can't be. No one knows but you an' Pete.”

“And you are to give me one of the biggest stones to never split. Ha, ha!” She laughed merrily, then grew anxious again. “You know you are safe with me. But I tell you the job is discovered. The old man sent for Brooklyn Bob at once. He swore he would have back those diamonds, or you and Pete should do a ten-year stretch in Sing Sing.”

“Hang the old man! I'll do him up yet. Shall I tell Pete?”

“Yes, after I'm gone. I don't like Gopher, myself. Look out for him, Dot. He'll do you a bad turn yet.”

“Guess he won't yetch d'e Dodger snoozin'. Now you skip, Kate. I'll be round to-morrow wi'd d'at diamont. It'll be a scorcher, it will!”

But as Kate turned to go, Pete seized her by the arm and drew her, in spite of her resistance, to the opposite end of the room from the door and packing case.

“I got a bird to pick with you, Miss Kitty,” he growled. “I heard what you said 'bout Gopher doin' some one a bad turn.”

“Let me alone!” cried Kate, struggling ineffectually.

“See here, Pete!” interposed Dot, angrily. “Let d'e gal alone. Kate belongs to me, she does.”

“I don't care who she belongs to. I'll learn her to talk civilly about gents as wouldn't wipe their feet on the like of such chippies as steps in her shoes—”

Biff! biff!

The Dodger, who was very quick-tempered, struck Gopher Pete two sharp blows with his fist that nearly keeled the burlier scamp over. Kate screamed again. Pete, uttering a fierce oath, rushed upon his younger opponent, and a three-cornered struggle ensued.

While the attention of the three was thus taken, the shadow darted noiselessly from behind the packing case to the large chest. Raising the lid slightly, he felt inside for a moment, then swiftly withdrew through the half-open door without being perceived.

By this time Kate had thrust herself between the combatants more than once, only to be pushed aside. Dot, being physically the weaker one, was getting rather the worst of it, when the girl ran toward the door, pointing and screaming.

“Look! look!” she cried. “I did not leave the door like that.”

A mutual alarm caused the two combatants to look around. The door was now wide open.

“Hold your diff, Dot,” exclaimed Pete. “I can do you with one hand, but there are other things to look after now.”

“Did you see any one, Kitty?” asked the Dodger.

“No; but the door was nearly closed after I came in. It might have swung open, though.”

“Now you git, Kit Clower. You've made mischief, as it is.”

With this Pete took her by the arm, thrust her into the entry, and closed and locked the door. Dot said nothing. He, too, was now realizing how foolish was their previous contention at such a time. Kate's words concerning Brooklyn Bob also made him uneasy. The name of that noted young detective was always a source of dread to East Side rascality.

“Don't forget to come to-morrow,” called Kate through the keyhole to her youthful sweetheart.

“Now you skip, or I'll come to-morrow

instead of Dot," growled Gopher Pete, impatiently. "If you don't let the women alone, Dodger, they'll be the death of you yet. I never amounted to much until I give 'em the dead shake, see?"

They heard Kate clatter petulantly down-stairs. Then Dot, without replying, raised the lid of the large iron-bound chest. Pete saw him bend over the smaller one. Both boxes had remained unlocked from the time the Dodger had hastily thrown the bag of diamonds back into its place of concealment when Kate Clower appeared.

The Dodger felt with one hand. Then he hurriedly inspected the inner box.

"Holy Moses! If d'at don't beat d'e very Satan!" Dot began to execute a frenzied war-dance of exasperation around the chest.

"What's the matter with the bloke?" Pete jerked Dot roughly by the arm, but the lad released himself and capered about like one insane.

"What in thunderation ails ye?" shouted Gopher Pete.

But Dot only pointed at the chests and gasped in a stuttering sort of impotence. Seized with a vague alarm, Pete rushed to the chests and looked for himself. Then he, too, was seized with a strange frenzy of exasperation. But suddenly he paused, eyed the Dodger malevolently, then seized the lad by the throat.

"Out with it!" hissed Gopher Pete, shaking the Dodger as a terrier would an unusually large rat. "Shake 'em out! Give 'em up! Prejuce the goods! No shenanigan, now, or I'll paralyze ye with me fist!"

"I ain't got 'em!" shrieked the Dodger, tearing loose from Pete and continuing his mad dance hither and thither. "Don't be such a chump! Didn't I t'row 'em in there when d'at gal knocked? And now they're gone!"

Once more Gopher Pete ransacked both chests in a hurried yet thorough manner. He kicked the smaller box wrathfully across the room.

"I knowed yer was comin'," cried Dot, "so I sent away d'e kids and got inter my water rig, for I knowed we'd have a divvy and I was goin' to plant my share down by d'e docks. There's no place like d'e docks for hidin' out swag as is bein' searched for. And now the shiners is gone!"

"It ain't twenty minutes since we was handlin' 'em here on this very table. There ain't no one been here but Kate."

"Kate's all right. She's true, as well as fly. Besides, she brought me a warning that the old man had found out his loss and was after us."

"That for the old man, if we only had the diamonds back!" and Pete snapped his fingers. "I think the imp himself must have slipped in an' cribbed 'em again!"

"Not the devil himself, Pete, but one of his imps!" shouted the Dodger, whose attention had been attracted to something on the packing case.

"Look at that!"

Gopher Pete came eagerly forward; then his coarse, vicious features took on an expression of fear as he saw what Dot meant.

"Great Caesar!" exclaimed the burglar, in an awe-stricken tone.

CHAPTER III.

BROOKLYN BOB.

Dot the Dodger was pointing to a rude double B that was hastily scrawled in blue pencil on the surface of the packing case near the lamp.

"Brooklyn Bob, by all that's holy!" continued Pete. "He must be equal to Satan himself."

"There's where our diamonds have gone! Kate said the old man had sent for

Brooklyn Bob. But how and when did he get in?"

He must have been here within the last half hour. We know we had the stones in our hands only a bit ago."

A feeling of fear was added to the rage the two felt at the mysterious disappearance of their prize. The name of Brooklyn Bob had been often enough connected with marvelous feats of detective skill, but this seemed to cap everything they had experienced before.

"Well, we know he's been here, and we know he's got the swag." The Dodger spoke with sullen emphasis. "What's the odds how he got it, so long as he got the stuff?"

"If I had him here I'd choke the life out of the mug."

Gopher Pete was very angry. Had Brooklyn Bob been in that room just then it might have taken all his well-known skill and courage to have coped with the two baffled scoundrels.

"What will we do?" asked Pete at length. "Your headpiece is better than mine. That's one reason why I've always wanted you as a pard."

"Do!" ejaculated Dot. "We'll have those diamonds back if we have to kill some one! That's what I says."

"Right you are! But you must do the plannin'. When it comes to actin', I'm there with both feet. But I never could plan a raid to do any good yet."

Thereupon the couple, after sundry oburgations on their luck, laid their heads together in council. The club meeting and the kids were all forgotten. The recovery of fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds now absorbed all their energies.

Yet amid their plans and plottings a vague dread remained with them both—a dread inspired by the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the stones and the appearance of the boy detective's monogram. These things had been done—yet how?

Meanwhile Kate Clower, or Flippy Kit, as she was often called, made her way down a series of dark corridors and stairways on her route to the street.

The house seemed to be deserted, except for the occupants of the large room in the fifth story. It stood at the head of a gloomy alley that opened into a larger East Side thoroughfare, and its cobwebbed and grimy interior, though cut up into numerous rooms and passages, was full of forbidding shadows and vague echoes.

At the last dark turning before reaching the outer door, a hand was laid softly yet firmly on the girl's arm as she flitted by, still nervous from the effect of her stormy visit to the Dodger and his pal.

"Don't scream," whispered a mysterious voice. "It is Brooklyn Bob!"

But Kate did scream, faintly, however.

"So soon!" she gasped. "He said you would be on the trail, but I did not think it would be so soon."

"Never mind what 'he' says. You mind what I say. You are not a half bad sort of girl, Flippy Kate. I know you. But you keep bad company."

"I go with whom I please," she returned sullenly, and would have fled, but that he still held her fast.

"Perhaps. But you must not give me away. That is what you came here for, isn't it?"

"What if I did?" This defiantly, for she felt that he somehow was aware of the object of her visit—to warn the Dodger.

"This much: The old man will turn you adrift. You shall live on him no longer unless you reform at once. He picked you out of the gutter and he gave you a home. Now, in his distress, you turn against him for the sake of a worthless

kid whom I intend to send up for this very job. Now you can go. You are warned. Do as you please. but if you don't square yourself all round, it will be the worse for you. See?"

He gave her a slight push, and she ran out into the alley as if pursued. Hurrying into the street beyond, she disappeared in the throng of passers-by, on whom the rays of the setting sun were gently falling though the city's haze and smoke.

Presently there emerged from the door of the silent house a trim, boyish figure, neatly clad in the fashion most affected by youths who are just emerging upon manhood.

His dark eye, curly hair, and olive complexion were singularly like the Dodger's. But the shifty glance and restless manner of Dot were supplanted by a keen composure of manner that evinced a conscious strength of will as well as a sense of self-sufficiency in all emergencies.

He placed his hand to his side and pressed it as if flattening out some hidden protuberance.

"I guess it don't show," he said to himself, as he hastened out into Essex Street by still another dingy alleyway. "Lucky that girl did come and raise the row. I half expected to get on track of the stones, but I did not think I would come it over those mugs so complete all at once."

He was now far enough away from his starting point to hail a cab. Into this he got, after bidding the driver to go fast in the direction of Harlem.

"If the old man is wise he will place his stones in the safe deposit vaults where his bonds and coupons are. I dare say, though, he will still decline. There is no accounting for the stupidity of an old fool!"

In the seclusion of the cab Brooklyn Bob took out the chamois-skin bag and carefully examined the contents. The splendid glitter of the larger diamonds were very alluring.

"Just now I can almost understand why it is Mr. Slade has such a passion for handling these beauties," thought the young detective. "I guess Flippy Kate, though, will hardly get that stone the Dodger was to take to her in the morning!"

In half an hour's brisk drive, the region about the lower Harlem was reached. The driver stopped for further directions.

"I guess I can walk the rest of the way. Here is your fare, cully, and there is a quarter more because you don't over-charge. So long!"

And Brooklyn Bob plunged into a gloomy maze of sprawling streets that grew more open and disreputable looking as he neared the river. Rows of houses, vacant lots, detached dwellings and a rocky unevenness of ground surrounded him. The early twilight softened the semi-rural squalor of the scene and distance lent some attractiveness to the mingled sounds of the great city that rumbled fitfully on all sides.

Bob finally stopped at a gate and pulled a bell-knob that protruded from the brick wall lining the street. An open space was on the other side, behind which rose the outlines of an isolated dwelling of ancient pattern and considerable size.

A negro in brown livery opened the gate and seemed surprised at the sight of Bob.

"That you, Zero?" asked Bob, entering and leading the way up a brick walk to a side door of the house. "Didn't look for me back so soon, did you?"

"Well, hardly, sah. Misser Slade, he been kickin' up a powerful ruction all day. Seem like he'll have ter go ter d'e 'sylum yit, 'bout sumpin' or nurrer. Guess he be

glad to see yo', Misser Bob. I'll go tell him yo' is here."

"Well, no. You stay below, Zero. Tell Kate not to disturb us. I will go up alone. The old man will be glad enough to see me—you bet!"

They had entered a dark hall, but Bob seemed familiar with his surroundings. Without waiting for Zero to say more, he darted up a flight of stairs that appeared to lead toward the main wing of the mansion.

A broad corridor in the second story he traversed rapidly in the dark. As he turned into a narrower one, the gleam of a light from under a closed door ahead seemed to denote human occupancy.

Brooklyn Bob knocked once, then waited. A scurrying sound was heard from the inside. Bob knocked again. Then a voice replied:

"That you, Zero?"

"It is Brooklyn Bob. Let me in, Mr. Slade. I have news for you."

"If you are back so soon it is evident you have nothing to report," grumbled the voice as the door was opened. "I ought to have employed a Central Office detective. But Zero was fascinated by some fishy tales he heard of Brooklyn Bob, and here I am without my diamonds, and with a round bill to pay, I suppose."

"I don't know about the bill," was answered.

Bob was scrutinized closely by a lean, bent, weazened old man, as he was grudgingly admitted.

"At least I have not yet presented any, have I, Mr. Slade?"

"But you will, though. Every one does."

He refastened the door with an old-fashioned bar and chain, puckering his lips and eyebrows the while; then he motioned Bob to a seat, watching him with an uneasy, expectant gaze through a pair of steel-bowed spectacles.

The furnishings of the room were meager and old. In one corner stood an old-style safe, such as a modern cracksman would laugh at. A century-old clock ticked mournfully, and the two windows were closed with heavy shutters. The term miser was written even more strongly on the person of the master than on his surroundings.

His nose and chin nearly met over a mouth that was merely a bunch of avaricious puckers. His ancient dressing-gown was ragged and patched.

Brooklyn Bob surveyed his new employer with scarcely concealed disdain. If love of money would make some men like this, it might be that there were better things in the world, after all.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Slade, impatiently, after a pause. "What is it? Have you heard anything? Are the scoundrels spotted?"

CHAPTER IV.

A MISER'S FOLLY.

For an answer, Brooklyn Bob asked:

"Have I ever failed in any important case yet?"

"How should I know? Have you heard of my diamonds—my beauties—my darlings?"

Bob's lips curled at this. The vivid expressions of endearment as applied to inanimate things rather disgusted the lad. He plucked the bag of stones from his pocket and flung them on the table.

"There are your diamonds. Now, pay me fifty dollars and I will relieve you of my presence."

The old man flung himself literally on the bag and hugged it closely to his breast. He laughed in a mirthless way, and his small, restless eyes danced behind his glasses. Suddenly he concentrated them on Bob.

"Are you sure they are all here?"

"I think they are. I had to grab them in a hurry, and one or two may have been left. Besides, others have handled them as well as I."

"And I dare say some have been kept. Stay! Let me count and see."

Mr. Slade consulted a memorandum, then counted the stones over twice. Suddenly he sprang at Brooklyn Bob and shook the lad.

"You wretch! There is one large one missing. Hand it over quick, or I will hand you over to the police!"

Bob's disgust was now at seething point. He rose, put on his hat, and by a sudden movement repossessed himself of the diamonds, which their owner had put back into the bag.

"Fifty dollars, Mr. Slade, or—"

A howl from the old man interrupted him. Then the miser broke out into a mingled chorus of pleadings, threats and denunciations. Bob, more dissatisfied than ever, flung the diamonds upon the floor.

"Take them!" he cried. "I did not think there was so mean a man in the world."

As he turned to go his foot caught in a rug and disclosed beneath it a displaced piece of flooring some six inches square. In the cavity below shone a gleam of yellow metal. Evidently the old man, when Bob first knocked, had either forgotten to replace this, or had been unable to, in the brief interval of preparing for the admission of a visitor.

"A nice haul those blokes will have if they come again!" he said, as he made his way to the door.

"Stay!" cried Slade, now all anxiety over the accidental discovery of this new place of hoarded gold. "Don't tell any one. For God's sake, don't tell. It is only a few—a very few dollars kept for hard times."

"I don't care what it is, or what it is for. I want to get out of here. I am sorry I ever took up a case for such a fellow as you seem to be. Let me out."

Bob was fumbling at the bar and chain. The old man finally opened the door.

"If you bring back that missing diamond I—I will give you that fifty dollars."

"Rats! I have restored you fifty thousand, and here you are, kicking about paying what you agreed to pay, just because you think one paltry stone is gone. If you were a younger man I would smash your face."

By this time Slade had the door open. He laid a hand on Bob's arm.

"You won't tell—will you?"

"Tell what? How cursed mean you have acted?"

"You will not—you will not say anything about—about my having the diamonds—or—that hole in the floor? It holds very little money—very little, indeed."

"Course I won't! What do you take me for? You don't deserve it, but I will just waste one word of advice on you, old man. Gather up your stones and gold and take them to the bank—safe deposit—anywhere, rather than keep them here. You are spotted and it is dangerous."

"Get out! If I am spotted, it will be by you. Bah! I know—I know a thing or two—see?"

For an instant Bob felt like striking his unjust accuser. But he choked down his wrath and hastened along the hall without replying, lest his spleen should get the better of his discretion under the sting of further converse.

At the head of the stairs a door suddenly opened, and a girl in a tea gown came out. She held a lamp that cast a glow over a face of singular refinement and beauty. Noticing Bob's angrily

flushed face, she laid a white hand gently on the young detective's arm.

"Has anything gone wrong?" she asked. "I thought I heard my grandfather cry out."

"Your grandfather is very unreasonable, Miss Clara. I brought back his diamonds, and he declined to pay for my services because he claims that one stone is missing. It may be so, but that I could not help. Indeed, it took sharp work and some nerve to get hold of the swag at all."

"Don't mind grandfather. Naturally he is disposed to be just. But he has indulged his love of gold so long that it, at times, warps his judgment. Will you wait for me a moment?"

Bob did not want to wait, for he was heartily sick of his whole connection with the case, but Clara's bright eyes and winning persuasiveness of word and manner were, for the time, irresistible.

"Yes. I will wait, but I had rather not."

Clara placed her lamp on a window sill and hurried away in the direction of the old man's room before Bob could say more. Five minutes later she returned, her face wearing a smile of relief. Then she placed in the lad's hand a roll of money, well wrapped in paper.

"Don't open it until you are outside," she said, as Bob tried to decline taking the roll. "You must take it. Why, you've earned ten times the amount. Don't mind grandfather. He don't mean what he says. Don't I know him? Haven't I lived with him ever since his nephew ran away and I was a wee little tot."

"But he refused to pay me anything. I don't want money unless those I work for think I have earned it. Please take it back."

"Not much. It is only the love of money that makes grandfather seem to be unjust. He is good, otherwise."

"Well, if you insist, I will take it, though I had rather not. One good turn deserves another, so I will give you a pointer that I tried to make with the old man—only he wouldn't have it. Make him place his valuables in some bank or other safe place of deposit."

"He would never consent. But why do you urge this?"

"Because he has been robbed once and he is spotted. I know these rascals. It is my business to know them and their ways."

"Grandfather has so long been used to having his treasures where he can see and enjoy them that it would nearly kill him to be deprived of the pleasure of counting and handling his wealth."

"Tell him his life may be in danger. You are much isolated here. A desperate gang might commit murder and search the house, and no one be the wiser for hours. This is only a caution. But, Miss Clara, I believe it to be a highly necessary course to follow, if you all value your safety."

"I will do what I can. But what makes you think we may be invaded again? It is only four days since the house was entered and the stones taken. Now they are back again."

"Well, I believe that whoever took them has means of knowing that there is a good deal of money here, besides. Some one must have given away one of Mr. Slade's places of concealment or the stones would hardly have been found so easily."

"Do you think so? Why, we have only Zero and Kitty Clower."

"I suppose you have full confidence in Zero?"

"To be sure we have. Grandfather brought him here from Virginia thirty years ago. He trusts Zero even more than he does me!"

"What about this Clower girl?"

"Oh, I guess she is all right. We have had her nearly a year."

"If I only 'guessed' she was all right. I would keep an eye out."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Nothing; only I feel sure that she was the one who let the robbers know where the jewels might be found."

"She could not know. Grandfather never lets her into his room."

"But she may be sharp. You are too innocent yourself to be up to the dodges of some of your sex, who are not so innocent."

"But I can hardly turn poor Kitty off on your mere inferences."

"I do not say turn her off, but watch her closely. I have no proof that she gave the snap away to the crooks who did the job. But I do know that she warned one of them, after the job was done, that I was on their trail."

"Can this be so?"

"Bet your sweet life it is! I heard her say the words myself. She did not know I was around, however."

Clara's face showed the horror she felt at the discovery. To her, Kate Clower had seemed innocent enough, ever since her grandfather had taken the girl in from the very street, because, being homeless, he could secure her services as a servant for little or nothing.

"She is known in certain shady quarters as Flippy Kate," continued Bob. "I think she has a lover. She poses at times as an East Side shop girl. That is about all I know, now."

"She ought to go at once. How I have been deceived in her."

"Let her stay; but, as I said, watch her as closely as you can without exciting her suspicion. Through her it may be possible to secure further proof of the more guilty ones."

"Then you will continue on this case?"

"I told Mr. Slade that I was done with it and with him. But if you desire it I cannot refuse you, I fear."

"I do desire it. Only tell me what to do and I will do everything I can to aid you."

"First make Mr. Slade place his treasure in the bank. Then watch out. I will see you later."

Bob pressed her hand warmly and left the house. Miss Clara entered her room. Then another door opened and the face of Flippy Kate looked out.

CHAPTER V.

AN ESCAPE AND STARTLING DISCOVERY.

She hastened softly down the stairs after Brooklyn Bob, overtaking him as he was about to call Zero to let him out of the yard gate.

"That you?" he asked, carelessly. "Then I won't call that darky."

"I heard what you said to Miss Clara," whispered Flippy Kate. "I think it was real mean to give me away."

"Oh, you do! Well, I cannot help what you think. You know very well that I ought to have had you turned adrift at once."

"I wish you had never come here," said Kate, her anger mastering her prudence for a moment. "But for you—"

"But for me you would have got that diamond the Dodger was to bring you. But for me—"

"But for your meddling, things would have gone right. I shall have you done up yet, Brooklyn Bob."

"And I will see that by to-morrow you will be looking for another place. I won't disturb your master to-night, again, but you can begin to pack in the morning. In fact, I have a mind to arrest you now."

At this Flippy Kate dropped her high tone, and begged to be allowed to quietly

leave on the morrow, promising, on her part, to report to Bob and keep him advised of her whereabouts.

"I ought to take you along now. Were you really repentant and disposed to help me, you could stay on, for a time, at least. So I told Miss Clara. I see now this is no place for you. But you must promise to keep me posted as to what the Dodger and the gang are up to, or I shall have to run you in at once."

Kate promised, rather effusively, though there was a curious glint in her eye, which was, however, concealed by the darkness.

After Bob went away she ran to her room, and, being excused by Miss Clara for the night, she hastily put on her hat and jacket and let herself into the street.

Hastening to the elevated, she took a down-town train and was soon in the neighborhood of Essex and Division streets. She did not remain down there long; for, hardly an hour later, she was back in her little room in the Slade mansion, busily packing the two satchels that contained her personal belongings.

"I am glad I saw Bob," she said to herself. "We understand each other now. With all his sharpness he will find that he has acted the fool in not pinching me to-night when he had the chance."

Toward midnight she took her luggage and crept noiselessly down the stairs. Zero slept soundly below, but there was no dog. Kate, therefore, had little trouble in letting herself out at the yard gate. This she closed, yet did not fasten.

The side street in which she now was opened into a larger one. From the light at the corner a dim glow penetrated obscurely. Scarcely had she turned to walk away when a tall policeman came up to the street lamp and looked leisurely about.

Flippy Kate flattened herself against the wall and remained motionless. She did not want to be seen there, just then; least of all by an officer.

After a distressing interval of suspense, the policeman rapped the curbing sharply with his club and walked on down the main street. Kate hurried off in an opposite direction and made her way to the elevated in a round-about way.

When she arrived at her destination down-town, she knocked at a shabby house in a back street and was admitted so promptly that it would seem as if her arrival was expected.

The night passed slowly, and when morning dawned the dingy old mansion of the Slades looked as quiet and uninteresting as if nothing ever happened there out of the usual run of things.

Miss Clara was awakened by a knock on her door and the voice of Zero outside.

"What is it? You say that Kitty is not up?"

"Can't seem to make d'e gal hear nuttin'," replied Zero. "In ginerel, as yo' knows, she is up and doin', d'e fu'st one. D' yo' reckon d'ey is anything wrong, Miss Clara?"

"Surely not. I guess she is only sleeping sounder than usual. You go down and push along breakfast. I will see to Kitty."

But when Clara entered the hired girl's room, a few minutes later, she found not only no Kate there, but that the bed had not been slept in.

Somewhat puzzled, she went below and assisted the old darky to prepare the morning meal. Then she began to wonder that her grandfather had not made his appearance. He was usually an early riser.

"Give his bell a pull, Zero," Clara ordered.

Zero jerked a bell cord communicating with Mr. Slade's room, but nothing seemed to come of it.

"Grandfather must be sleeping very hard this morning," Clara remarked. "Go up and tell him that breakfast is on the table."

Zero obeyed, but soon came back with a deepening expression of anxiety on his face.

"Seem like I can't make him hear, Miss Clara. I pound and I pound, and d'en I try to git in, but d'e door won't open."

"What can be the matter? Perhaps he is ill?"

Clara hastened from the basement dining-room into the corridor and hurried up the stairs. The silence and gloom of the upper hall sent a shiver through her and she thrust her face over the banisters.

"Zero," said she, "I feel nervous. Suppose you come up with me?"

"To be sho'. D'at I sho'ly will."

And the ancient servitor ascended the stairs as nimbly as his fifty years of service would permit him to do. They walked along the lengthy corridor traversed by Brooklyn Bob the night before, and reached the intersecting entry that led to the chamber of Mr. Slade.

Once more Zero knocked and called. Clara added her own clear tones, now shrill with anxiety. But there was no response.

"What can be the matter?" asked Clara, but Zero only shook his grizzled head.

They listened long and anxiously. The silence throughout the old house was painful in its intensity. The confused noise of the streets seemed to accentuate the stillness.

"Don't you hear something inside?" whispered the girl. "Or do I imagine that drip, drip, dripping sound?"

But old Zero was slightly deaf. He was, moreover, greatly scared. So was Clara. Indeed, the girl felt an unreasoning desire to scream. The very vagueness of their terror seemed to augment the unbearableness of the feeling.

"Suppose you call a policeman," suggested Clara. "Don't be gone long."

Zero was off like a flash, his celerity betokening the reluctance of the negro to remain there longer.

Clara waited and waited. The half-distinguished sound, as of water slowly dropping inside the room, was so painful that she retreated to the stairway and waited there until Zero returned with a policeman, who led the way to the closed door.

More knocks and calls followed. Then the officer said:

"Perhaps I had better break the door in—that is, if you want it done. I say nothing as yet."

"Yes, yes!" cried Clara, half hysterically. "Oh, my poor grandfather! Something awful must have happened!"

The officer was strong, but both he and Zero applied their full strength to the door without immediate effect. The lock at last gave way, allowing the door to open about an inch.

Then Clara, peering anxiously, gave a scream.

"Look! Look!" she cried. "Grandfather is ill or something has happened."

The foot of the bed could be discerned. On this a pair of upturned feet could be seen. They were twisted somewhat sideways.

"What is it holds the confounded door?" exclaimed the policeman, once more applying his whole strength.

"It is the bar and chain," explained Clara. "Grandfather always used one on his room door."

The officer took his club, inserted one end between the chain and a staple. Then he pried for a moment and the staple was twisted out.

The door was then pushed open and the policeman entered, followed by Zero and Miss Clara.

The girl screamed again, and tottered as if she would faint. But recovering, she ran forward toward the bed.

"Grandfather!" she cried. What is the matter with you?"

CHAPTER VI.

BROOKLYN BOB TO THE FRONT.

On the bed lay the form of old Mr. Slade. He was somewhat doubled up and on his left side, with his head hanging over the edge of the bed, which was much disheveled, as if a struggle had taken place. The face was not at first visible.

Suddenly Clara, who had pushed on in advance, stopped. Her questioning cry was choked into an emotional gasp, and she pointed to a dark-looking pool by the bedside on the floor.

Something was drip—drip—dripping, at intervals, from the silent figure on the bed. Zero, suppressing his own signs of horror, led Clara, now half fainting again, to a seat, where the full horror of the thing was somewhat concealed from the eye.

The officer advanced to the bed and turned the head upward. Old Mr. Slade's throat had been cut.

"D'at gal didn't hear suttin' drappin' for nuttin'," commented Zero to himself.

Then the faithful old servant gave way to his own grief, threw himself down on his knees and wept aloud over this horrible end of his old master.

Mr. Slade was dead beyond a doubt. The body was still limber, and not very cold, as yet. The room showed signs of a hurried, yet thorough, search. The old-fashioned safe was open and ransacked. Two holes in the floor lay empty and exposed. The most persistent search failed to discover either money or diamonds.

What had been done had been done thoroughly. Even the old man's murder had been accomplished at a stroke or two of some keen-edged instrument by a deft and powerful hand.

There were few blood stains about, except where the drip had fallen on the floor.

It looked as if the old man's head had been held in that unnatural position until his struggles had become too weak to effect any change of attitude.

After noting these particulars, Zero was despatched for aid to the nearest police station. The officer remained in charge.

Clara sat like one dazed by grief and horror for a time; then she crept from the room and went to her own apartment, where she strove to think more clearly concerning the probable cause and consequences of this heart-sickening affair.

"One thing is certain," she reflected. "Robbery was the object. For all I know the murderers may have gotten all grandfather had. He distrusted the banks. There are no other relatives besides myself, except his nephew Lewis, who ran off so many years ago."

"Lewis was a wild little kid, and grandfather was too strict with him, I guess. Yet I wish I knew where the lad is. I feel so very, very friendless."

Then a sudden thought caused her to blush slightly, and she seemed to hesitate in her mind as to the proper course to pursue. At last, however, she rose, wearing an air of decision.

"I will do it," she spoke, half aloud. "I will do it right away. Boy as he is, his skill is wonderful. The quickness with which he traced and brought back those diamonds was equal to anything done by older heads. Yes, I will go to Brooklyn Bob at once; he will direct me best in my dire trouble."

She arose, dried her eyes, and began to make preparations for the street, when she heard a knock at the yard gate, which was close to the window of her room.

She ran down-stairs and was met in the lower hall by Brooklyn Bob. The young detective's face softened sympathetically, though in his eyes burned a light kindled by professional ardor and excitement.

"I met Zero on his way to the station," explained Bob. "He told me everything and begged me to come to you. The gate was unfastened, but I knocked so that you might not be startled at my entrance."

"I am so glad you came!" declared Clara, impulsively. Then she stopped suddenly.

"Then I, too, am glad I came. If I can do anything for you, in any way, I hope you will let me know."

The sound of heavy feet were now to be heard in the hall.

"What is that?" inquired Bob.

"I suppose it must be the policeman and his companions."

"If the police are in charge, perhaps I had better not interfere."

"I want you to stay. You found the stolen diamonds, and if grandfather had followed your advice and placed his valuables in the bank, perhaps he might have been alive now. Whatever the police do, I hope you will look into this matter yourself."

"You are Mr. Slade's nearest relative?"

"Yes, unless I except a nephew who ran away years ago, when he was a small boy, and who has not been heard of since. Zero and I both want you to do what you can for us. If there is any money coming to me you shall be well paid."

"Never mind the pay. I only wanted to be sure of your free consent to whatever course I might find it best to take."

"You have my consent to do anything you see fit to, except to give the case up."

"Thank you, Miss Clara. I will do my best, then. The first thing is to examine the scene of the affair thoroughly."

"It will not be necessary for me to go back there, will it?" Clara naturally shrank from another visit to the death chamber.

"Not at all. Now that I am authorized by you, I can go ahead myself. Indeed, I have already made one discovery."

Bob produced from his pocket a briar-root pipe, with sundry rude carvings on the bowl.

"I found this at the foot of the water pipe down which the scoundrels had come. Perhaps they went up that way, too, as it passes near one of the windows of your grandfather's room."

"You saw this as you came through the yard?"

"Yes. And I think I recognize the carving on the bowl as the work of some one I know. Now I will make my examination."

Bob withdrew, after bidding Clara to be of good cheer and to look on him as a true friend to the end.

At the door of Mr. Slade's chamber he encountered a young-looking policeman, whom he knew.

"Hello, Noonan!" accosted Bob.

"What's going on inside?"

"Is that you, Bob? Well, me lad, I guess there ain't much use for you here. What are ye up to, in'how?"

"Just browsing around. I suppose I can go in."

"Indade ye cannot! Ivery thing is kept close for the coroner."

"Have the others gone and left you in charge?"

"They have thot. Now, suppose you take yoursilf off, and thin I will be in charge by mesilf ag'in."

"See here, Noonan; I am a privileged

character in this house. Miss Slade has given me full charge to represent her interests. I wish to examine the room and the body. She is the only relative. Must I bring her here to satisfy you of my authority?"

"G'wan with ye! She'd betther be givin' the case to a Cintral Office detective!"

Yet Noonan looked perplexed. Although he was new on the force, he had heard of Brooklyn Bob's skill, and was not certain whether he should exclude an accredited representative or not.

Bob started back.

"Miss Slade knows better than to place this murder in the hands of those chumps. She is prostrated, and it is brutal to bring her here again. But if you are going to be mulish, Noonan, I will have to do it."

"I wish the sergeant had stayed here himsilf. Arrah, then! G'wan with ye. And if ye disturb in'anything we will run you in yoursilf, Misther Bob. Moind thot, now!"

"All right!" acquiesced Bob, slipping back and twisting himself deftly inside of the door, which Noonan was gingerly holding partially open. "You can stand there and watch me, if you like. I'd as soon have you there as a blind man."

Bob immediately began his investigation. Noonan shook his fist half angrily, but contented himself by leaning against the door jamb and keeping an eye on the alert movements of the boy detective.

He first examined the body and the bed, which had been left undisturbed. He turned the dead man's head upon the pillow so that the face was downward.

"Don't ye be touching things!" called out Noonan, sharply.

"That's all right. See, I'm putting it back."

Bob did not explain that a certain greenish tinge about the base of one ear had excited his curiosity, nor did he let the wary Noonan know of a certain minute dart, scarcely an inch long, that he had found under the head of the corpse, nor of a faint puncture at the base of the skull.

To the lad's mind the puncture had been made by the dart which, in some way, had become disengaged from the flesh, and had not been perceived by others. Bob furtively appropriated the dart by wrapping it in a scrap of paper in order to avoid any possible chance of flesh poisoning himself.

He made a brief, though thorough, search of the room, exchanging the while sundry repartees with Noonan, who was evidently anxious to get the lad away.

When the young detective came to examine the window nearest the water pipe, he was surprised to find no sign of either entrance or exit at that point. There were cobwebs covering the sash in such a way as proved that the window could not have been raised in a month or more.

Th's was puzzling. Bob looked repeatedly elsewhere for signs of the murderers, but except a few vague stains on the floor, he could see nothing. The walls and ceiling of the room contained no evidence of any trap or other mode of exit.

The boy had just glanced into a large alcove partitioned off from the main room by a dingy portiere, when he was called by Noonan in peremptory tones.

"Ye must go! Thot's all there is about it, Bob! I hear some av thim comin' back now. It may be the coroner. Come, out with ye!"

For an instant Bob thought of disputing this dictum, but changed his intention. He withdrew swiftly, and dodged the officers coming back by descending the back stairway.

He said nothing to Noonan about either the pipe or the strange-looking little dart.

Nor, in fact, did he make known anything to the police.

"They don't help me," he reflected. "Why should I do anything for them? Let them hustle for themselves! I will do the same!"

He returned to the room where Clara was, and found her preparing to be taken by Zero to a neighboring boarding-house.

"I cannot bear to remain here by myself," she declared. "Zero thinks it would hardly be proper, either."

While the young detective was telling her about Noonan's objections and his own ill success, Zero returned with a carriage. Clara looked wistfully at Bob, who instinctively read her wish.

"May I go with you and see you safely in your new quarters?"

"I do wish you would," she replied.

So they drove off together, Zero on the box with the hackman.

At the door of a quiet Harlem boarding-house Bob bade her farewell for a time.

"Do not worry," he encouraged. "Leave all to me: When you are summoned by the coroner, answer his questions, and give yourself as little trouble as possible. We will run Mr. Slade's murderers down yet. Trust me."

She did trust him, and felt comforted as she saw him walk briskly down the street.

The Brooklyn delegate had scarcely turned the first corner, when he was accosted by a sandwich man from the curb line of the pavement:

"Be you the chap as is called Brooklyn Bob?"

CHAPTER VII.

MOUSING MIKE ON THE TRAIL.

The young detective looked closely at the ragged figure that bore, front and back, the programme of an uptown theatre spread out in gaudy colors over two large square boards.

He was about to reply shortly, when the sandwich man winked in a peculiar way. The action seemed to strike Bob, for he peered into the man's bearded face more closely. Suddenly he gave the man's whiskers a playful twitch, so loosening them that the man made a quick grasp at his chin adornment.

"Quit, you duffer!" he exclaimed. "I must be pretty well hid if I come so near to throwing Brooklyn Bob off the scent."

"Mousing Mike, by all that's holy!" assseverated Bob. "What are you up to in that rig? You can't be that down on your luck, Michael?"

"Ah, but I am though. It was the drink that did it. I had a good private detective job with some of them Twenty-third Street houses. Then I took to lushing—more's the pity!"

"Mike, I am ashamed of you! There isn't a better detective on the East Side than you, when you keep from the booze. How long since you had a drink?"

"Not since I spent what I got on my last suit of clothes."

"Everything in soak, I suppose?"

"Everything. And I haven't wet my whistle in two days. Och, but I'm that dry!"

"If I get your things out of hock and put you on a good job, will you agree to keep straight until it is put through?"

"Bet your sweet life I will. Just try me, Bobby, my lad—try me!"

Brooklyn Bob looked keenly at the shabby figure before him. The pallor beneath the dirt betokened hardship. He remembered that Mousing Mike had a larger practical acquaintance with East Side rogues than any man on the Central force, of which Mike had once been an honored member.

"Give me all your pawn tickets," or-

dered Bob, in a peremptory tone, that rather belied the real sympathy he felt. "Go to my rooms. Take a bath on the way. I will be back with your things shortly. But remember!"

The man stood before this smooth-faced boy like a corrected school child in front of a reproving teacher.

"If you take another drink—even one guzzle—I will give you the shake for good. The best detective in the world is no good as long as he boozes!"

Mike renewed his promise very humbly while handing over his pledges, which he produced one after another from somewhere among his rags. Then Bob handed him a half a dollar.

"Get rid of those boards. Then get a bath and a shave. You see I trust you at the start. Any failure now, and all is up between us."

"Never fear. I'll show up with a clear head and a clean breath," called the sandwich man, as Bob started away.

As the two separated they were noticed by a man who had been lurking in the shadow of a porticoed building near by. This individual had seen the meeting between the sandwich man and the young Brooklyn expert.

"Now what does that fly-looking kid want with Mousing Mike?" he asked himself. "I'll wait about and see. Something is up, I'll bet on that!"

After Bob's departure the man came forward and accosted the sandwich man.

"Hey, cully!" he called. "You look dry. Come have a smile at yonder saloon. I'm feeling rather that way myself."

Mousing Mike looked keenly at the stranger, who was carelessly, though fashionably dressed, and had a nose like a claw and an eye like a hawk. Then the sandwich man started off at a rapid gait, but the stranger followed him along the curb, repeating his offer to treat the poor fellow. Finally Mike cast his boards off and turned on his tormentor.

"Now you git, Slumpsy!" he cried. "It is listening too often to the likes of you that has brought me where I am to-day. If you follow me, I—I'll put a head on you! See?"

Mousing Mike then turned and went off at almost a run, leaving his sandwich boards in the gutter, and taking to the sidewalk himself.

"Just as I thought. Mike is up to some game," muttered the man he had called Slumpsy. "I never knew him to refuse a drink before. I'll follow on and see what his lay is now."

So Slumpsy began the role of a shadow, using great caution, however, lest the object of his attentions should find out what was up.

Mike hurried along, occasionally wiping his dry lips, until he reached a barber's shop, where he had the required shave and bath. When he emerged his half dollar was gone, but he was clean.

Soon thereafter he arrived at Brooklyn Bob's quarters. The shadow followed, and, creeping upstairs, hid himself behind a coal box near Bob's door. Scarcely had Slumpsy done so, when the young special appeared. Mike had already entered by means of a key given to him by the detective.

When the shadow saw Brooklyn Bob he lay low until the door had again closed; then he drew up to the keyhole. For an hour he listened, until Mousing Mike, having donned his own proper garb, and listened to Bob's instructions, was ready to depart. Slumpsy thereupon hurried away.

"I might have known it," he muttered to himself. "As long as Brooklyn Bob was after the diamonds he would be sure to be on the trail of the old man's property again. I must notify the gang. I wouldn't

wonder if we hadn't better scatter. Should Mike stay sober and Bob stick to the trail, there will be lively times ahead."

Mousing Mike was so changed in appearance that any one who had known him only as the sandwich man could hardly have recognized him now. He was dressed in a well-cut suit of business tweed, wore a nobby Fedora hat and sported a rubber cane. This last, though dudish enough in appearance, had eight ounces of lead in its head. Besides this, a bulldog revolver reposed in one hip-pocket.

He took his way down town to the neighborhood of Houston Street, then turned toward the East River. At a waterside bar-room he stopped, looked carefully around to see that he was not observed, then he went inside.

A bullet-headed barkeeper, with white shirt-sleeves rolled up over red flannel ones, was filling some liquor bottles behind the bar. Several dirty-looking loafers were dozing about the stove. The floor was sawdusted and the walls covered with cheap sporting prints.

"How are you, Skilly Jack?" saluted the detective. "How are the boys and the kids and the rest?"

"Sure, is it you, Mither Mike? I thought you was forsakin' these parts. We're pretty orderly around here just now."

"I don't doubt that. But I want to ask a favor of you this time."

"As if I ever could deny you anything," exclaimed the bartender, but his cold, hard eye had an aversive gleam, despite the politic good nature manifested in his words.

"I want you to get me inside the Willy Wallys to-night."

"Ah! G'wan with ye! I will be doing nothing av the kind! It would be more than me place here is worth, let alone me life."

They were talking in low tones, yet one of the loungers by the fire seemed to brighten a little. Then he scowled. Mousing Mike continued his persuasions, winding up with:

"You can at least give me the last countersign?"

Skilly Jack remonstrated for a time, but at last leaned far across the bar. As he did so the lounge by the fire also strained his faculties in an effort of greater attention.

"Thank you, Skilly," said Mike. "I'll remember to forget that old charge which has never been pressed."

"Bad cess to ye!" growled Skilly Jack, as Mike went away. "It is the likes of you as makes me tired all the while."

The lounge at the fire arose, stretched himself, and came to the bar.

"I guess you may set out the best you've got," he remarked, in an easy, self-assertive tone.

"Show us the color of your spon," retorted Jack. "I've booked all I'm going to book against the likes av you."

"Oh, no, you haven't! You'd naturally hate to have me tell de' gang what you just gave 'way to that bloke wi'd d'e cane."

Skilly Jack started. He grew ashy as the lounge whispered in a monosyllabic name, then added:

"That's d'e password, but I'll see it changed. We don't want no mokes like him pryin' 'round. So set 'em up, Jack! Some o' d'at red-eye brand, and a lot of it, or your name will be Denis afore morning."

Skilly Jack surrendered at discretion. The loafer drank all that day at the bar's expense.

Somewhat later on the same day the electric bell at the boarding house was rung and the servant brought up a card

ot Miss Clara Slade. Glancing at it, her sad face brightened.

"Show him up at once!" she ordered. "I am always at home to him."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GIRL'S PERIL.

A moment later a youth entered, who was greeted by her warmly as Brooklyn Bob. He was dressed rather more elaborately than in the morning, and Clara felt a vague distrust of, she knew not what, concerning him, as he seated himself.

"I hope you feel more comfortable than you did when I saw you last," he remarked.

"I hardly know. It was all so terribly sudden, you know. But have you anything new to communicate?"

"Nothing special, except that I may be compelled to withdraw from the case."

"What do you mean?" Clara felt a sudden sinking at heart.

"I regret that other and more important engagements threatens to prevent my giving the time to this case its importance demands."

"Why, only this morning you seemed anxious to go ahead!"

"Yes; but since then other things have turned up. In fact, my other business is pressing. Let me advise you, however, to trust everything to the police. Most of these private detectives will only swindle you out of money, while making big promises that they never mean to perform. I know 'em, miss, and you had better be guided by me and not listen to 'em at all."

"How strangely you talk! I am very sorry to hear it; but if you mean it, of course I must let you go."

"Another thing, miss: Change your boarding place at once. I hear the gang that did old Slade up know where you are. They are a desperately bad lot. I wouldn't wonder if they tried a kidnapping game or something when they hear you're putting the police on to them."

"You shock me! What else could I do? And yet, I should feel safer if I were where my quarters were not so well known. I will see my servant, Zero."

"Oh, he is all right. I saw him down below, and sent him on ahead to prepare your new quarters. In fact, so dangerous does this place seem to me now, seeing this gang knows where you are, that I brought a hack along to take you at once."

"This seems very sudden."

The girl was suspicious. She scanned the face of the youth closely. There was the same swarthy skin, the keen eye and tumbled curls of Brooklyn Bob. Even the voice sounded right.

"My interest in you makes me prompt," assured the lad. "There is, I regret to say, great need of haste."

"Of course, if you think such a course really necessary, I will go at once. I will have to pack."

"It is hardly necessary to take more than a change of clothing. You will be back here when those mugs are caught. You might take that ticker and those blazers along, however."

"Tickers and blazers! What do you mean?"

"Excuse me; I should have said that watch on the dressing case and any jewelry you happen to have. Best to have 'em with you. See?"

Clara packed a handbag and placed her few jewels about her person, feeling all the while as if what she was doing was hardly right, yet impelled thereto by the prestige acquired by Brooklyn Bob in his previous restoration of the diamonds.

In a few minutes they were descending the stairs. Clara said she must notify the landlady of her temporary absence

and have the room retained for her future use.

"It isn't necessary. I took the liberty of speaking to her as I came in." Brooklyn Bob bowed with his politest air.

"I am sure you have a great deal of assurance," said Clara, hardly able to put up with this. "I must see Mrs. Ames, however, myself."

By this time they were at the front door, which opened easily. The youth calling himself Brooklyn Bob made a signal to the hack driver, whose vehicle was at the curb. The latter did something to his horses, and they began to prance in a clumsy way.

"No time for that, now," urged the youth. "It is all right. Those horses won't stand. See? Pardon me, but we must really get off before the horses cut up too much. It is really all right with the landlady. Said she'd save the rooms for a month."

While speaking the lad managed to hustle Clara into the hack, despite her feeble distrust and reluctance.

Just as the carriage door was closing, a stout-looking woman came to the steps and looked out.

"Oh, Mrs. Ames!" called the girl. "I want to—"

"It's all right, ma'am," interrupted the lad, tipping his hat politely. "The young lady is going to see some friend." Then to the driver, in a lower tone: "Why don't you whip up—you fool?"

The hack started off at a rapid pace, with the youth inside striving to quiet the now startled girl. The landlady looked on in some perplexity and wonder; but as nothing further occurred which was visible to her that seemed out of the way, she soon dismissed the incident from her mind, thinking, doubtless, that Miss Slade was accompanying some relative or friend on a drive or visit.

Once the hack was well under way at a rapid pace, the youth grew a little stern in manner at Clara's persistent questionings.

"I demand to know where you are taking me?" she urged.

"As I have told you, we are going to a safer place. If you really distrust me so, I might as well get out here."

"You said you thought of giving up my case. I think you act very strangely as it is."

"If you will wait a few minutes you will see yourself in safe quarters where the gang cannot find you. Then I can leave you and you can go to the police. But if you continue to insult me, I might as well drop all connection with you at once."

His manner was so genuinely like one offended without just cause, that Clara's fears gave way to a sense of self-reproach. After all this singular conduct, Brooklyn Bob had proved his truth and ability in the diamond case beyond a doubt. Should she not, therefore, go slow in giving him offense now?

So she grew quiet for a time. The carriage went on at a rapid rate for a long time. Clara was not very familiar with New York, yet she began to be aware that they were going through dirtier and more disreputable portions of the city than she had ever seen before.

"Where can we be going?" she at last asked, as glimpses of the East River and the shipping were visible at the street crossings.

"Well, you know we must cross over to get to Brooklyn."

The youth laughed and nodded.

"I ought to know Brooklyn," he added, "or I wouldn't be called Brooklyn Bob. Once over there, you will be safe from intrusion. The blokes as did the old man up will never find you there."

It seemed to Clara that Brooklyn Bob

was developing a far more free use of strange words than he had done formerly done, in her presence. She did not reply, but withdrew distrustfully into the corner of the carriage.

At last the carriage was turned in toward the curb and the driver stopped.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the young detective, springing up. "We have to get out here."

"We are not in Brooklyn. We have not even reached the Bridge."

"I know. But we get out here. Stop and rest a while, then take a car. See?"

"No, I do not see! I scarcely know what to make of you. Don't touch me!"

The youth was trying to assist her from the carriage, but she avoided him and sprang out, unaided, feeling thoroughly alarmed and distrustful.

High, dingy buildings lined the street that abutted upon the waterside, half a block lower down. The passers-by were shabby and disreputable, as a rule.

Clara saw an open door in the brick building in front of her that seemed to be a sort of side entrance behind a gaudy bar-room, which had its main portals further down. In that door stood a muscular, sporty-looking man, who appeared to be expecting them.

"We'll just step inside and rest a bit," said the youth, taking her by the arm.

"Don't touch me, I say!" repeated Clara, shrinking from her surroundings instinctively. "I shall go back—"

The youth's clasp tightened and she was forced across the narrow sidewalk in a twinkling.

"Glad to see you, miss!" spoke the sporty man, seizing her other arm. "Come right in. Been lookin' for you."

A scream from Clara interrupted him; but before it was fairly out of her mouth she was inside and the door was closed with a bang.

A well-dressed man, carrying a rubber cane, had watched these proceedings from under an awning some distance away. As the carriage leisurely drove off he intercepted it about a block from where Clara had left the vehicle and held up one hand.

CHAPTER IX.

MOUSING MIKE'S STRIKE.

The driver, though hardly on the alert for another fare, turned in to the curb. The man gave a brief address and entered. A short, brisk drive brought them to a house in West Tenth Street, where the man got out.

"You will have to come up-stairs with me, cabby," said the man. "I haven't the change with me."

Cabby seemed to think this an unusual request, but followed without much demur to a second story back room, the door of which the man unlocked and entered. Cabby stood outside.

"Come in, come in!" called the man. "I must hunt up the change."

"I'll wait out here," answered cabby, cautiously.

"Well, then, here is your money," and the man, taking something from a bureau drawer, advanced to the door.

He held out one hand. As cabby reached forth to take his fare, his wrist was seized in a steel-like grip, and he was jerked violently into the middle of the room.

When he turned the passenger had closed the door and placed his back to it, while in his hand he held the rubber cane by the smaller end. His other hand was in his pocket.

"What d'yer mean by d'is?" demanded cabby, blusteringly. "Lemme out o' this."

When you have told me who that lady is you had as a fare, I may think about it. What were you and that kid up to, and

why was he so anxious to get her inside that building?"

"How should I know?" growled cabby, sullenly. "He said he was a detective. Little I know about d'e fly cops and their ways. Gi'me my money and lemme go."

"Look here, my man! That kid was no more a detective than you are an honest cabman. I know you and I know him. And I am going to know what your lay is before I am many minutes older."

"Ain't got no lay. I want me fare. One dollar it is."

"Your fare will come or your arrest, according as you are open with me. Don't you know me yet?"

Cabby suddenly developed an intense curiosity at a peculiar emphasis in this query. The man smiled, then suddenly pulled off a large mustache and removed a dudish-looking wig.

"Thunderation!" exclaimed cabby. "If it ain't Mousing Mike!"

"Mousing Mike it is. And you are Kid McCoy, with more aliases than I have fingers and toes. Now, will you be open with me or must I run you in?"

The bogus cabby, seeing that disguise was useless, affected a rude jocularity.

"Ye'r a cute one, you are, Mike! Divil a bit would I 'a' minded the wig. But that mustache was what did me. So little of ye'r red mug did it leave uncovered that ye'r own brother would take ye for a stranger, and what will ye be pinchin' me for?"

That the Kid was talking to gain time was evinced by his restless eyes, that darted over Mike's person incessantly. But the detective only smiled. His left hand loosely held the loaded cane, but the Kid knew that the right one grasped a concealed revolver.

But for that the rogue would have made a desperate dash for freedom. He knew he was in for a sweatbox process, with liberty as the price of confession, and a cell at police headquarters as the result of stubborn silence.

"I want to know what you and the Dodger are up to?" insisted Mike. "If I am not mistaken I saw Gopher Pete in that doorway. Precious anxious they both were to get the poor girl inside."

"You wouldn't 'a' kept her waitin' on d'e pavement, would ye?"

"Who is she?"

"Aw, now, how should I know? I'm a Willy Wally meself, I am. But I ain't up to all their tricks. I was told to be at a certain place, and when I had a fare, to drive like smoke to where you saw me—bad luck to ye for havin' such sharp eyes."

"You know more than that, McCoy. I must know who the girl was and what she was being taken to that disreputable resort for. Come, be lively! Time is precious with me to-day!"

And the keen-eyed detective moved threateningly.

"Same here. But if you question me all day, it is all you'll get, for it is little I know."

"Well, then, you are under arrest."

Mousing Mike locked the door, and, crossing the room, pressed a button in the wall.

"Ah, there! What are ye up to now?"

"Nothing; only sending for the patrol wagon."

"G'way with ye'r kiddin'! This ain't no patrol box."

"No, it is not a patrol box, but it is the private room of Brooklyn Bob. Know him?"

"I'm no city d'rectory," growled the now very uneasy man.

From the increasing uneasiness in the Kid's eyes, Mike felt sure that the crook cabby did know of the famous boy ferret.

"Yes, you've heard of him, I know."

Well, you are as good as pinched right now."

Mike had returned to his station by the door.

"Brooklyn Bob has means of communicating with others here that may be serviceable to us."

A sharp ting-a-ling sounded from a curtain by the button on the wall. Having assured himself that the door was secure, Mike again crossed over and held a telephone receiver to his ear.

The Kid watched him like a hawk, as Mike called "Yes," into the telephone.

"Well, what do them Central dudes say?" he asked, sneeringly, for it was plain that he doubted what Mike had said concerning the patrol wagon.

"They will be here shortly. Keep your distance," cautioned Mike, drawing his pistol, but betraying no uneasiness in his countenance or manner.

What his ear had really heard at the receiver was the following:

"Is Mike at my rooms?"

"Yes," returned the detective.

"Was afraid you would not be there," continued the voice, audible, of course, only to Mousing Mike. "There is the very devil to pay up in Harlem. Miss Slade has disappeared from her boarding house. Landlady says I took her off. I questioned her closely. From what she says I think I am on to them. D'ye hear?"

"Yes," called Mike, again, while the Kid was furtively examining a rear window near where he stood.

"Lag the Kid and the Dodger if you meet them. Don't let either get away if you have to shoot for it. Same thing regarding Gopher Pete, or any other of the Willy Wally gang. Any news?"

Of course Mike had news, but how was he to convey it without letting the Kid into the deal? What Brooklyn Bob said was not heard by any one except Mike, who had his ear at the receiver.

While Mike was cogitating the Kid was gradually approaching the window unperceived, for the moment. The detective was going over the situation rapidly, in the light of what Brooklyn Bob had told over the telephone from Harlem.

When Mousing Mike had first seen the carriage he was still lurking about the neighborhood of the saloon where Skilly Jack had given him the Willy Wally countersign, which the loafer by the stove afterward told Jack he would have changed. When the carriage stopped at the private entrance behind the saloon and the occupants got out, Mike was astonished. He thought he saw Bob, who he knew should then have been investigating the Slade case up at the murdered man's house in Harlem, for Bob had gone back there to look further into a discovery he had made in the alcove on the occasion of his first examination.

So Mike had hung about and watched. He soon recognized Gopher Pete in the doorway and Kid McCoy on the box. Then, partly by intuition and partly by close inspection, he came to the conclusion that the seeming boy detective was a double. It now flashed over him that this double must be the Dodger.

"Bob and the Dodger are about the same age," he thought. "They look much alike. I am a chump for not reading this before. But who the deuce is the girl?"

The news now conveyed by telephone cleared away the mental sky. Who should the girl be but the abducted heiress of the murdered Slade?

And here was Mike, with one of the chief actors of the conspiracy before him. Mike felt good all over.

"But how the deuce shall I let Bob know without the Kid's catching on?"

These reflections were the mental work of only an instant. He placed his lips to the enunciator once more.

"Hello!" said he. "You've heard of the bird in the hand?"

Mike glanced at the Kid as he spoke.

CHAPTER X.

COUNT ONE ON THE MOUSER.

But Kid McCoy had his eyes on the window, which, being at Mousing Mike's back, did not excite the detective's suspicions.

"Yes, I've heard of that old saw," came through the 'phone receiver just then, and which prevented Mike from noticing a sudden flash of expression in the Kid's eyes. "What of it?"

"Well," returned Mike through the enunciator, "I've got one. That's all. Good-by!"

The detective hung up the receiver and turned to the Kid, whose hard face was now as unresponsive as a stone.

But in the brief interval while those last words were echoing through the 'phone, a youthful face had appeared at the window outside. The face of Bluey, another of the gang—a carrot-haired lad who had taken service under Dot the Dodger, in the latter's club, which Gopher Pete, it will be recalled, characterized so contemptuously in the opening chapter of this story. Then the hand of Bluey had briefly beckoned, and the entire vision had disappeared before Mike turned from the telephone.

Kid McCoy knew that some of the gang must have noticed his taking up the detective as a fare, and that his cab had been followed. His courage rose. He was at present ostensibly a cabman, and rented his horse and outfit from respectable parties. But that was only as a blind in order to enable the gang to follow their nefarious occupations the better and to divert public suspicion from himself.

When Mousing Mike concluded his talk with the Brooklyn special, he felt that he held a winning card in his hand.

"Come," he said to the crook, "you must go with me."

"What for?" responded McCoy, who in his turn also felt surer of himself, now that he was aware of the nearness of his pals.

"That's good. Why, I might say I wanted you for half a dozen jobs. But if you will squeal on the one I caught you at not half an hour ago, I will be easy on you. See?"

"No, I don't see. Where is that patrol wagon? Looks like it ought to be gettin' in on time." The Kid spoke sneeringly, for he now had his own opinion of Mike's subterfuge.

"Don't you fear. I have you dead to rights. You'll not get out of this scrape in a hurry."

"What scrape? Can't ye quit kiddin' a feller?"

"You professed to know nothing about that girl in your cab. Shall I tell you what I already know?"

"What do I care what you tell?" but the Kid flashed an uneasy glance at the detective.

"You were abducting the granddaughter of the man who has just been murdered and robbed in Harlem. Her name is Clara Slade."

Mousing Mike watched the Kid closely as he spoke, but McCoy was on his guard. After that first uneasy look his face remained expressionless.

"Furthermore, we are onto your game. The gang planned the murder and got away with the swag. The girl is to be gotten out of the way to remove a possible damaging witness, and as she is the old

man's heiress, in order to secure a good ransom for her return to daylight."

"That's a nice fairy tale, that is," said the Kid, with scorn. "I guess you will have a sweet time provin' all that yarn."

"Well, we will hold you as a means of proving part of the yarn, as you term it."

Mike produced a pair of handcuffs.

Suddenly the Kid fixed his eyes intently on something behind the detective toward the door. His face expressed both surprise and even terror.

"Look! look!" he cried, pointing in a frenzied manner. "It looks like the old man, and—"

Despite his long experience with the ways of crooks, Mike allowed his head and eyes to turn backward for an instant. McGoy withdrew one hand from his pocket swiftly. It wore a brass "knuck," and as his words ceased he struck out sharply.

Mousing Mike fell to the floor like a log. A purple bruise appeared behind his left temple. He lay motionless.

The Kid laughed harshly. Then, stooping over, he handcuffed the detective with his own bracelets, drawing his arms behind his back. Then the Kid bound Mike's legs firmly, seized the latter's pistol, watch and money, threw up the window and was gone in an instant.

Had Mike been on the watch he would have seen the Kid run along the roof of a lower building that abutted the wall just below the open window and join Bluey; who came from behind a near-by chimney. Then the two disappeared through a trap-door that was suddenly opened from below. Before it shut finally, another of the Willy Wally gang was seen.

After that nothing more occurred to enliven the scene for some time. Finally Mousing Mike began to recover.

The cool air blowing in at the open window tended to revive him the more quickly. When he sat up and looked around a clearer idea of his situation began to dawn upon his dazed conceptions.

"Great Heavens!" he groaned. "What an everlasting chump I am!"

He said nothing more at the time. As he afterward intimated, the situation was beyond the power of language to do justice to. In all his experience as a detective he had never met with such luck as this.

While Mousing Mike was trying to release himself he heard steps coming rapidly up the stairs.

"Just my luck!" he grumbled. "Isn't this a nice fix for the likes of me to be caught in?"

A push at the door was followed by an insertion of a key in the lock, then in came the Brooklyn detail.

The young detective's manner was one of excitement and his movements extremely hurried. When his eyes fell on Mike, still sitting on the floor with his hands fastened behind his back and his legs yet bound, the lad fell back in amazement.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he exclaimed. "I had not intended to show up here so soon. Lucky I came, though. What the deuce is the matter with you, Mike?"

Mousing Mike raised his shamefaced visage to reply. Then his eyes suddenly took on a look of keen excitement.

"What is the matter with ye, Bob?" he cried out. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPECIAL'S CLEVER WORK.

Not very long before Miss Clara was called upon by the young man who personated Brooklyn Bob, that youthful ferret had gained access once more to the apartment in which Mr. Slade had been murdered.

This he accomplished by a judicious use of flattery and money upon the single policeman now in charge of the otherwise deserted premises. Straggling numbers of curious people were loitering both about the front door and also the closed side gate that gave entrance to the yard.

Noonan was not about and the officer at the door proved to be less obdurate. So Bob was soon examining the same alcove from which he had been called by Noonan earlier in the day.

There was a closed trap-door in the ceiling near the corner of the alcove, and close to this a sort of cupboard with shelves that were let into the wall. Bob had briefly noted these things at first. Now he proceeded to draw off his shoes; then he climbed up by means of the shelves.

The closed door was easily raised. Bob drew himself up into the garret-like space between the ceiling and the sloping roof. He crouched down and took a squint at the bed in the large room below through the opening of the alcove where the curtains were drawn aside.

"Just as I thought," he muttered.

Then he lay down on his stomach along the dusty girders and squinted once more. After that he traced sundry footprints in the dust that led both to and from the trap. In order to inspect these he lighted a pocket lantern.

The tracks led directly to a sloping door in the roof. This was easily raised. A rusty staple and chain hung loose from the under side of the door. It had evidently been wrenched loose by the insertion of some kind of pry and lever from without. The rusted and ancient nature of the whole contrivance rendered it a mere plaything in the hands of an expert house-breaker.

From this outside door to the top of the perpendicular water pipe was but a few feet. Bob carefully examined the top of this, and was rewarded by discovering signs where both paint and rust had been rubbed off, and also faint prints of stockinged or bare feet along the coal-tarred roof. The dust from inside the garret had made these last.

The murderers had evidently both entered and made their exit by this route. Returning once more to the trap in the ceiling, Bob again laid himself flat along the girders. There were prints of other hands besides his own in the dust.

"Lying right here was the fellow that blew the dart behind the old man's ear," thought Bob. "As Mr. Slade was found on his left side, that position would leave his right ear exposed. Then the chumps went down and completed their job."

Bob had already taken the little dart which he had found on the murdered man's pillow to an analytical chemist, who at once pronounced it to be tipped with a subtle poison. This poison, said the chemist, would produce instant paralysis of the nerves. If used upon any of the connecting cords of the brain a mental stupor would instantly supervene, that would be succeeded by death.

Having made all the inspection necessary for his purposes, Bob carefully re-closed the trap-doors. The high, old-fashioned battlement that lined the edge of the roof had protected him from the curiosity of the people in the street below, except for a moment when examining the water-pipe.

Bob now went down and made another brief search of the rooms below. The body had been removed. The police had tumbled things about greatly in their clumsy search for clues. The young ferret went into the yard and found faint but undeniable signs of the murderers there.

A barrel in one corner of the wall

showed where they had made their exit. Perhaps they had also entered there.

"I don't think now that Flippy Kate let them in," reflected Robert the Keen, "but she doubtless posted them regarding the lay of things inside the house. Let me see. These tracks are not over twelve hours old."

Bob knit his brow as he re-entered the house.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I will do it. If I can only secure a sample of their scent it can be accomplished."

He hurried from the house and made his way toward the nearest elevated station. On the way he diverged for a hurried call on Clara. As he rang the door-bell Mrs. Ames came. She seemed astonished at sight of Bob.

"Where is Miss Slade?" she asked.

"That is what I want to know," he replied. "I wish to see her a minute."

"Why, you left here with her not more than five minutes ago."

"Who? I?"

Bob was thunderstruck.

But, recovering, he proceeded to seek an explanation. Five minutes of rapid conversation made the situation clear to him. Mrs. Ames gave a close description of the two who took Clara away.

"The Dodger!" exclaimed Bob. He looks like me. The other I think I know as well. Keep your eyes open, Mrs. Ames. There is a deal of crooked work going on here. Where is Zero?"

Zero was summoned. He had just returned from an errand down town, and was still unsuspecting of anything wrong. Bob concluded not to deceive him. He told the old dorky not to worry. Miss Clara would return in due time. To Mrs. Ames he said that the young lady had undoubtedly been abducted.

After explaining who he was, he cautioned her against saying much about the affair publicly, and promised that Miss Slade should be found more quickly by observing secrecy than by talking openly.

"Had I not better see the police?" asked she.

"My dear madam, trust me. Miss Clara gave this murder case into my hands. I will bring her back safe and I am now on track of those who killed and robbed that poor old man."

Thus he quieted her, and presently was making his way to the old house where he had recovered the diamonds, after telephoning to Mike from an uptown station.

Its passages were deserted, as usual, and sundry hollow echoes, as Bob stole up the dark stairways, betokened that most of the rooms were still empty.

"This is a risky move," said he to himself. "I may run on some of the gang here, though they have mostly sought other quarters, except the Dodger. Still, I must have something to fix the scent."

Bob soon arrived at the room where he had secured the diamonds. He listened and looked through the keyhole. Then he let himself inside with a skeleton key. Cautiously he exposed his pocket lantern, and after a little search secured one of the Dodger's lately worn garments.

He was about to withdraw when a sound of footsteps coming up the stairs met his ear. There was no time to go out, lock the door and conceal himself. He glanced hastily about, shooting the narrow gleams from his lantern here and there, until his eye fell on the dumb-waiter shaft.

An instant later he had climbed up inside this, using the rope and the corners of the narrow shaft as a means of ascension.

It was a trying position. He lowered and raised himself alternately to find some firmer resting place for his feet. Just as some one came into the room he found a

knot hole into which he inserted one foot. By bracing himself with his elbows he could bring his eyes on a level with the opening. This gave him a chance to see what was going on.

The door, having a spring lock, had closed when Bob first entered. His presence, therefore, was not detected by the new arrival, who struck a match and lighted the lamp that was still there.

It was Slumpsy, well known by Bob as one of this particular gang of which Gopher Pete was regarded as leader. Brooklyn Bob was somewhat surprised.

"I didn't know Slumpsy was into this," thought the young ferret as the new-comer drew from his pockets a number of articles, wrapped the same in a paper, and concealed them under the flooring of the room in such a way that even the police would not have suspected the spot.

"I ought to arrest him," decided Bob. "But not now. He will hardly squeal. Perhaps by letting him go the others won't be so apt to be on their guard. I'll lag the things, though."

When Slumpsy withdrew, which he presently did, Bob climbed out of his shaft and was quickly in possession of the articles which Slumpsy had concealed. He wrapped up a similar looking parcel containing one of the Dodger's disused shoes and placed it in the hole whence he had abstracted the other things. Then he, too, rapidly withdrew and left the room without further adventure.

The things he had taken from the Dodger's garment were placed in a hand satchel, and Bob looked like some traveler just in from the country. At the last landing before the street was reached, he heard the outer door open.

Bob sprang into a deep doorway as a light figure came up the first flight of stairs at a rapid gait. There sounded a swish of skirts, and a feminine figure swept by. Bob reached forth one hand and laid it on the girl's arm.

She screamed with terror, then wheeled, and, releasing herself, ran down the stairs. Bob followed, overtaking her near the street door.

"Flippy Kate!" he exclaimed, as the light from the transom revealed her identity, "What are you doing here again?"

CHAPTER XII.

FLIPPY KATE FLITS.

It was Kate Clower, sure enough. But the girl seemed to be laboring under some excitement. When she saw who had intercepted her she jerked her arm away, and said with some asperity:

"Here you are again! Let me go!"

"Not until you tell me what is up."

"I am in a hurry. I want to go up-stairs and get back again before Slumpsy comes. I don't want him to—" she broke off abruptly.

"Slumpsy has come and gone. You had better be open with me, Flippy Kate. It may stand you in good stead later on."

"I was about to say too much. But you are so persistent with your everlasting habit of asking questions."

While she was speaking Bob noticed a bruise on the back of her hand, and also that one of her eyes was bloodshot.

"Come. Be open with me, my dear. Those brutes you consort with have been abusing you. Why try to further incriminate yourself in connection with an awful crime by shielding them from justice any longer?"

Bob was usually irresistible with the girls when he chose to be. No small measure of his astonishing success had been owing to his deft manipulations of the whims and weaknesses of the fair

companions of the rogues he was so fond of catching.

Flippy Kate found Bob's clear, expressive gaze wonderfully consoling just then. The memory of some very recent insult was also strong upon her, and the marks to which the lad alluded were fresh and sore.

"Why should I care what becomes of him?" she asked herself, hardly conscious that she spoke aloud. "We—we quarreled and he—he struck me—yes!" turning to Bob and raising her voice angrily. "He beat me—me!"

"Then I would have satisfaction. Shoot me if I would play sweetheart for any fellow who would leave such marks as that on so pretty a face and hand as you have, Kate!"

"Come, then!" she spoke with nervous, hurried emphasis. "They are going to leave. By dark they will be under way."

As soon as the first word of assent was out of her mouth, Bob led the way to the street, keeping fast hold of her hand. As they hurried through the alley to the main street he said:

"I understand. You will not regret this, Kitty. Besides, he never gave you the diamond he promised you. I know!"

"I wouldn't have minded that if he hadn't shown me so plainly that he was after her as soon as she came."

"Whom do you mean? Miss Slade?"

This was a shrewd guess on the part of Bob, more for the purpose of drawing her out than anything else.

"Yes, Miss Clara. They brought her there scarcely three hours ago. She screamed when she began to find out where she was. Dot had personated you and got her down town on some pretext. When he had her safe he began to show open attentions. She fought and went into hysterics. When I remonstrated he struck me. That made me mad, and I—we—well, we had a sort of fight. Look how he has bruised me!"

In the open daylight Kate's bruises were much more apparent.

"I remained by Miss Clara, though, despite his treatment. Then his pals took his part, and I was finally fired into the street."

"I should think they would have feared to anger you, lest you should split on them. Don't they understand that you must know too much?"

"They think I really know very little. But I do know more than they think. Why, if it had not been for me, they would not have known where the old man hid his—" she again stopped, as if fearing that she was saying too much.

But Brooklyn Bob helped her out.

"His money and diamonds. Of course I knew they must have been put on to the graft by some one in the house, and—"

"No, that is not what I meant. They knew all about the house. I merely saw that the fastenings of the trap-doors were loose. The Dodger knew all about the house, I say."

"How could he, unless you posted him?"

"I don't know; but he undoubtedly did. I overheard much of their plans discussed when they thought I was asleep."

During this talk they had been hurrying toward Bob's rooms, which were not far away. As they entered the house Kate, having at last made up her mind that she had gone too far to recede, held Bob back in the corridor a moment.

"If I help you all I can what is there in it for me? Come, now, I want straight goods."

"Do all you can, and if it helps me secure proof to convict the real perpetrators of this great crime, I will see that you get off very lightly. Probab'y they may let you go entirely free."

Kate reflected a moment. Then her lips were compressed resolutely. At the same time Bob never looked more seductive and handsome.

"Whatever you have to do here, do as soon as you can," said she. "Then arm yourself, take one good man, and follow me. Time is precious now."

"Follow you—where? You must be more open."

Flippy Kate stamped her little foot.

"Don't be a chump!" she cried. "Would I offer to go with you if I were not in earnest? They would shoot me the first if they caught me in your company and on their trail. Hurry up, I tell you. We may be too late."

"Too late for what?"

"To see them start. They will take a boat. How are we to follow a water trail, unless we see where they are going?"

"Then you don't know—"

"I only know that they will leave a certain house as soon as it is dark enough. A boat will be waiting for them. We must be near in another one. Then—"

"See here Kitty. This will not do. You must give me the whole plan at once, or I won't stir a step. I must know my ground with you. See? If you don't be open I shall be obliged to send you to the House of Detention to await the time when you will be wanted in court, and go ahead by myself. Now, be a good little girl and make a clean give-away of it all."

Thus adjured, Kate surrendered. A few minutes of rapid converse in the corridor followed, during which Bob's manner underwent an exciting change. At its conclusion he bade the girl wait in a small entry leading to his rooms; then he hurriedly unlocked his own door, entered, and found Mousing Mike in the predicament that has been described before.

After Mike's question, Bob composed his features as he answered:

"I haven't seen a ghost, Mike, but I must say that you look about as silly as I imagine most ghosts do look. How did you get into such a fix?"

Mike rather shamefacedly related his own adventures at the saloon with Skilly Jack, also his detecting the occupants of the carriage and his subsequent affair with Kid McCoy that had left him in his present predicament.

Meanwhile Bob released the man, who felt in his pockets with a rueful air.

"I hate losing money, watch and all," said he. "But I will get even with Kid McCoy for this yet."

"Well, there is no time for comment now. I want you to come with me at once. Go into my bedroom. Take a pistol and watch you will find in my trunk, and be back here in a jiffy!"

While Mike was gone on this errand Bob examined the contents of the parcel he had extracted from under the flooring of the deserted house. He smiled as he saw a small blowgun and a number of minute darts of a peculiar construction. The sharpened points were like the point of a needle, and were discolored by some substance.

"Deadly poison, I warrant," he muttered, locking the whole business in a secretary.

When he was rejoined by Mike, minus his rubber cane, which the Kid had also taken, the two went out, Bob carefully locking the doors. Both men were now armed with revolvers and carried handcuffs.

Beyond the little entry leading to his room, Bob paused and looked around.

"Hello!" he cried out. "Here is a go!"

"What is the matter?" asked Mike, seeing nothing wrong, for the shrewd Robert had told him nothing.

Flippy Kate was nowhere to be seen!

CHAPTER XIII.

NOT ALL BOB'S OWN WAY.

Scarcely had the door of his room closed on Bob than Kate began to regret her precipitancy in making such a complete revelation of all that she knew concerning the intentions of her pals.

"Confound him!" she said, meaning Bob. "I think he must have surely bewitched me. A—a—h! What is that?"

"It's only me, Flippy," and the boy Bluey showed himself in the dim light of the corridor.

He had noiselessly approached up the stairs.

"You are wanted," he continued. "Me and the Kid saw you come in here with Brooklyn Bob. I came up to investigate. Come! Let's skip!"

"But, I—I—cannot—"

"Rats! Don't we know what youse a waitin' here for? Reckon d'e Dodger and d'e rest is goin' to let you blow off on 'em in d'is here style? G'way! You makes me fat—i—gued, you do!"

A certain terror of the gang took possession of her. A vague idea of far-reaching vengeance unnerved her. A vision of stealthy shadows, armed with knife, s'ung-shot or poison, ever dogging her footsteps obliterated, for the time, the magnetic effect produced by Brooklyn Bob's presence and persuasions.

"Come on!" again urged Bluey, seizing her hand. "D'ey ain't no time to lose. De Kid just got away from one er them fly cops in d'ere himself. D'at cop knows where we all is, and he'll put Bob on our trail. Let's get out!"

Kate surrendered. A sound of steps within hastened her, and the two disappeared around the nearest street corner about the time that Brooklyn Bob and Mike came out into the hall.

Bob rushed down-stairs and took a hasty survey of the street. Nothing could be seen of Kate. Bluey's presence in that vicinity, he was not, of course, aware of. When he was joined by Mousing Mike the boy detective was in a fine state of fury.

"I ought not to have left the girl outside," he fumed. Then, observing Mike's wondering look, he remembered that his assistant knew nothing, as yet, of Kate's having been anywhere around.

"What girl?" asked Mousing Mike.

"Why, Flippy Kate. You see, I went to the Dodger's old quarters for one of his worn garments. I had an idea that we might trail up those chumps who did up old Slade. While there, I ran up with Kate and managed to get a partial confession out of her, and a promise to guide us to where Miss Slade has been taken."

"So the thing is all out at last."

"What do you mean, Mike?"

"Just this. I can take you to the place where Miss Slade was carried, but whether she is there now or not I cannot say."

"How did you find this out?"

"Well, I went down to the old water-side headquarters of the Willy Wallys, knowing that if anything turned up I would be apt to catch on to something. I gave Skilly Jack a stiff and got the password. But a bloke caught on, and I guess it will be changed."

"Seeing that, I hung about the neighborhood, and at last a carriage drove up to the side door of the house. Kid McCoy, disguised as a cabby, was on the box. Says I to myself, 'I'll look into this.' And so I did. While I lurked behind a lamp-post who should step out of the hack but you yourself."

"What are you giving me?"

"Of course it wasn't you, but a deuced good imitation. Out also steps a pretty girl, all flustered and anxious; then who should appear in the doorway of the house

but Gopher Pete, looking for all the world like a big spider enticing a timid fly. It came over me then like a streak of greased lightning that your double was no one else but Dot the Dodger. Later on, when you 'phoned me, and I knew the girl was really Miss Slade, it all came clear to my mind."

"The Dodger wanted to get the girl into his hands, or, if he didn't, Gopher Pete, the Kid and Slumpsy did. I guess they think that by holding the old man's heirless they will be able to extract a round sum from his estate, in addition to what was stolen when they did him up."

"Then you think that in order to get her into their hands as easily as possible, the Dodger personated me?"

"Precisely. If the Kid hadn't done me so slick I would have wormed their full plan out of him. As it is—"

"As it is, we are wasting valuable time," interrupted Bob. "If you know where Miss Clara was taken, let us hurry. Kate said that she was to be taken away at dark. It is now five o'clock."

The two called and entered a cab, after promising cabby double fare to put them at a certain street corner not far from the East Side saloon presided over by Skilly Jack.

"Now, Mike," said Bob, "we have both blundered. You let the Kid come it over you in a scandalous way. I allowed myself to be too easy with Kate. Consequently both of them are snapping their fingers at us for a couple of chumps."

"I never was so completely outwitted in all my long experience. Maybe it is because I haven't had a dram lately."

"You let drams alone. We will mutually drop our two blunders and resolve to be caught napping no more until these thieves and murderers are behind the bars, with proof enough in our hands to send them where they belong."

In a few minutes they left the cab and neared the saloon by a roundabout way. All seemed to be quiet. The private entrance to the rooms above was closed. A cautious inspection of the interior of the bar revealed nothing unusual. Skilly Jack was dispensing drinks. Now and then a thirsty customer in or out.

Behind the stove a knot of men were seated with their heads rather close together. As far as could be seen from without none of the toughs with whom this story has concerned itself was among the group.

Brooklyn Bob called Mousing Mike aside.

"You are better known about here than I," he said. "I will remain here and keep watch. I want you to go to the —th police station and give this note to Lieutenant Steerforth. He is on duty there now."

CHAPTER XIV.

A POLICE LAUNCH.

Bob was scribbling rapidly with his pencil. Then he tore out a leaf from his notebook and gave it to Mike.

"Tell him to have his launch at the — Street dock as soon as possible, with two men and a searchlight. See that things are under way, then come back to me with one man yourself. If I am not here then you will find a note under this for you."

Bob indicated the projecting end of a basement door that slanted outward from a blank wall just where they stood. Mike departed rapidly.

Then the boy ferret proceeded to don a mustache and assume a blond wig that also clothed his cheeks with a pair of delicate side-whiskers. He assumed a peculiar gait, as if one leg was somewhat stiff, put on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and boldly entered the saloon.

There were several tables in the back part. Bob ordered mixed ale, lighted a cigar, and, seating himself at a table very near a rear door, he proceeded to smoke so vigorously that he was soon partially concealed by whiffs of curling vapor.

People passed in and out. The knot by the stove conferred in low tones, but Bob did not recognize any of the men he was after among them. He withdrew against the wall, then reaching out, tried the door-knob. It turned, and the door opened. Scarcely had he shut it again, when Gopher Pete entered hurriedly and strode toward the bar.

Bob was not noticed in the half-gloom reigning at the rear of the saloon. He rose, cast a swift glance around, darted through the now open door into a dark entry, and stumbled against the foot of some stairs. These he softly ascended, and ensconced himself in a shadowy recess, once used to place a lamp in, just as Pete returned, bearing several flasks of liquor.

As the burly ruffian brushed by the young detective Bob heard him mutter to himself:

"Time's up! We must be off!"

Pete went on up, and Bob was thinking of following, when a door overhead opened and a party descended. As they passed Bob, he saw by the light from above that there were three men and a woman. One of the men was Pete. The others looked like Kid McCoy and the Dodger, but Bob was not certain, in the dim light. He heard the girl sigh deeply and at the door below appear to remonstrate.

A brutal masculine threat was the reply. Bob felt a wild desire to precipitate himself on the scoundrels and attempt to rescue her then and there. But prudence convinced him that such a course would not do. In that disreputable house, with no aid at hand, he would be quickly overpowered.

The party passed out at the side entrance, and the noise of carriage wheels convinced him that they were being driven off. He rushed after, but found the door fastened. He was about to make an exit through the saloon when he heard a step behind him on the stair.

Being thoroughly desperate, under a feeling that his prey was escaping, he produced his pocket lantern and shot a gleam on the descending figure. It was that of Flippy Kate. Bob seized on her at once.

"Where are they going?" he sternly demanded. "No nonsense now. This is Brooklyn Bob."

"My! How you scared me!" Kate was trembling with surprise and dread. Bob's appearance here, disguised, looked to her as if he was to be her Nemesis. "They made me run away from where you left me—"

"Hang all that! Where are they taking Miss Slade? Out with it, girl, or you will sleep to-night in the police station."

They have driven to the — dock. They are going to take a tug. They are going to run up the Hudson a few miles, where they have some kind of a place. An out-of-the-way resort. There they expect to keep Miss Slade until—until—"

"That will do. Open that door."

"Indeed, I have not the key. You will be easy on me, won't you—"

Bob thrust her aside and boldly entered the bar-room. Luckily Skilly Jack's attention was attracted by customers, and Bob slipped out unnoticed.

Once on the street, he penciled some instructions to Mike, bidding that assistant have the whole place raided at once, without giving the inmates any forewarning.

"That will secure any clues which may happen to be left there, and perhaps be of assistance in recovering the swag they have already secured. I must risk this chase alone. Lucky the dock my boat is to be at is below the one where they will take to the water."

Bob was now hurrying along the water-side street to a long dock that thrust itself out into the East River, several blocks below, and toward the Bridge. Arrived there, he made his way along its already nearly deserted, freight-strewn surface, to the outer end without any embarrassing encounter with private watchmen or the police.

"How the deuce am I to know their tug from any other?" he thought. "Lucky for me there are not many tugs out at this hour. Hello! This must be my boat. Steerforth is a dandy. I knew I could depend on his promptness every time."

A trim police launch shot out of the obscurity and brought up at the head of the pier. Bob hastily lowered himself into the craft. Besides the two patrolmen, Lieutenant Steerforth himself sat in the stern. He eyed Bob dubiously.

"Who the deuce are you?" he demanded.

Bob laughed, then divested himself of wig, mustache and side whiskers. Steerforth grinned as the light from a red lantern in the bottom of the boat fell on Bob's youthful but determined features.

CHAPTER XV.

A HEEL TO HEEL RIVER RACE.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" remarked the lieutenant. "Well, from the way Mike spoke I thought you were on the track of big game; so, as we are rather idle just now, I thought I would go along myself and get a share of the glory."

"And the reward," laughed the Brooklyn special. "I guess, if we're successful, we'll have boodle for all hands. I am glad you came. They are a desperate set and there are three of 'em, besides the girl; perhaps more, too."

"The girl? Tell us all about it, Bob."

"When we get started. Look there! Is not that a tug?"

A tug it was, crawling down the river, and making out from the shore toward the middle at a round gait. The darkness was such that Bob could not ascertain to a certainty just where the tug had left the shore, but it's increasing speed, and the fact that no other boats like it were anywhere near, convinced him that the craft was the one he was after.

The launch was put about, the lanterns lowered, and in a minute it was dashing out in full pursuit. As it happened, a private steam yacht was forging slowly up stream. A pleasure party on board were amusing themselves by turning a strong electric light here and there.

When the launch was still some two or three hundred yards from the tug and enveloped in deep shadow, the yacht's light struck the tug. Bob, watching keenly, saw the unmistakable figure of Gopher Pete standing in the bow.

"We are all right now," he assumed. "Keep well away out of range of that vessel's light, and we may slip up pretty close without arousing suspicion. She is too far out to be intercepted and it will be a stern chase at the last."

While the launch was thus warily drawing closer, Bob related to the lieutenant the main particulars of the search he was upon. When Steerforth learned that the parties in the tug ahead were supposed to be the authors of the Slade murder and robbery, he gave a low whistle. Then he patted the Brooklyn special on the shoulder.

"Well, my lad," said he, "I wish you luck. If you really are on trail of the

right parties it will more than equal anything you have done before, won't it?"

Bob did not reply. While he liked to feel that his course was commendable, he did not like open praise to his face.

"Sounds too much like taffy," he thought.

By the time the two craft approached the great bridge, they were cleaving the water at a nine-knot gait. The tug showed one stern light, and a red and green one at each side, in accordance with the harbor regulations. The launch, however, was veiled in complete darkness.

Down the East River they sped, the rear boat drawing steadily nearer to the tug, yet without apparently exciting the latter's suspicions until they were rounding the Battery.

There a large excursion steamer, all ablaze with electric lights, swept so near to the launch that those on the tug must have seen something which aroused their fears.

"Out goes their stern light," said Bob to Steerforth.

An increase of speed on the part of the tug confirmed the idea that the rascals were becoming alarmed.

The lieutenant produced a strong night glass, and from the bow of the launch Bob and himself alternately inspected the shadowy form of the lively little tug.

"They are watching us," said Bob. "As they passed that Chambers Street ferryboat I saw one of them with a glass leveled."

"They are beginning to think that we stick too close in their wake." Then the lieutenant added, to one of the patrolmen, who was serving as engineer, "Turn on the fuel, Jim. We may as well drop our mask now."

The launch's funnel belched forth a cloud of black vapor, the throbbing of the engine and the churning of the screw increased, until the whole fabric trembled.

"The tug is firing up, too," said one of the policemen, pausing from his work. "She's a corker for speed."

Both the men now had their coats off, and were devoting their whole attention to the management of the engine. Steerforth held the little wheel and followed the swift turnings of the tug as the latter avoided the various river craft, with unerring pertinacity.

"Suppose we try our searchlight," said the lieutenant. "They are on to us, now. We might as well see how many of them there are."

"All right. What shall I do? Steer?"

"Can you handle a boat?"

"Try me," said Brooklyn Bob, confidently.

Steerforth relinquished the wheel at once and busied himself in adjusting the light and its mechanism. The clever Robert showed himself an adept at the rudder. He had learned to steer during many boating trips over on the Long Island side.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT ARE THEY UP TO NOW?

The two boats were now abreast of the upper West Side. Some three hundred yards separated them. Along the Jersey shore twinkled a long line of lights, stretching up beyond Hoboken-way toward the Palisades. To the right the shore was nearer. The city's hum swept softly over the water, and a continuous blaze of fire marked the long line that extended from the Battery to Riverside Park.

Behind them Liberty held her fiery torch high up in the night air. As the river craft thinned out and the open Hudson rolled broadly before them, the tug began to edge gradually toward the Jersey side.

Suddenly the electric light on the launch sent forth an intense white flame, that

widened out as it darted toward the tug. In a moment the hull and outline of the flying boat were revealed to the pursuers as plainly as if the sunlight had fallen from above.

The rear of the tug's little cabin was open behind the engine. Men were shoveling in coal for dear life. The Dodger was at the wheel, and Gopher Pete stood with the pilot in the little half-open box over the cabin.

Besides Slumpsy and the Kid, five others were counted, not including Dot and Pete.

"Nine of 'em," announced Steerforth. "There may be others under cover. We won't be apt to have a picnic, Robert."

"Hardly. But where is the girl?"

Clara could not be seen. For a moment Bob feared that, perhaps, she had been taken elsewhere, but a flutter of a shawl from the corner of an open window somewhat relieved his apprehension.

"They've got her out of sight somewhere," said the Lieutenant. "Afraid she might scream or raise some kind of a scene should she see us. Ha, my boy! They evidently don't like our little view of their quarters."

Now that the searchlight was on, a good deal of commotion ensued on the tug. Men scattered here and there. Weapons were seized. The Dodger, Pete and the Kid disappeared.

The launch, shielded by a screen attached to the searchlight frame, was all but invisible. This was, of course, very annoying to the pursued.

Suddenly Bob saw Miss Slade appear at the window. Her arms waved; then she screamed, as some one seized her and drew her back.

"She has caught on to the fact that they are being followed."

"Our searchlight aroused her, I guess."

"I wish I could draw bead on that scoundrel," alluding to the one who had forcibly pulled Clara back again, and Bob's stern look showed how he would act, in that event.

"We don't seem to be gaining much now," remarked Steerforth. "That tug is the John McAllister, of Wallabout. I know her, now. She is a fast one. They must have her chartered. The owners would never go into anything crooked, knowingly, that is sure."

The night was a still and starlight one. There was little or no wind, and the great river was calm. As they drew away from the shipping, other sounds grew remote and the nervous thrills of the engines sounded far out over the water.

The splashing of the two swiftly revolving propellers was even louder yet. Wherever the tug turned, the launch followed closely, and with her blazing searchlight remorselessly bent on the forward boat all the while.

One effect of this state of affairs was the appearance, one by one, of the tug's crew in hastily improvised masks.

"They don't want to be recognized," remarked Bob. "But I already have spotted the ones I want most. Can we not go a little faster?"

For an answer, Steerforth pointed to the working forms of the two men, and the red-hot furnace. The launch was jerking and throbbing under the extraordinary action of her engines, like a living thing in torture.

"We are at our best," said the lieutenant. "Ain't that so, Jim?"

Jim nodded. He had hardly time to speak.

But if the launch was being pushed to her utmost, so was the tug. Her furnace glowed like a small volcano. Coal was being constantly shoveled into the open door.

Gopher Pete had squatted himself on the cabin roof, with a large grip at his side. Both he and sundry others were

openly fingering their firearms. It seemed as if the launch was slowly gaining, after all. Yet the distance between the boats lessened so gradually as to be hardly perceptible.

Mile after mile was left behind in this relentless pursuit. They were abreast of the Palisades. The lights of Yonkers were twinkling ahead, to the right.

"We are certainly gaining," said Bob. "They see it, too. What are they up to now?"

CHAPTER XVII.

TUG IN THE LEAD.

The tug made a sudden sheer toward the left shore, which they had been drawing near to for several miles by degrees.

Then the launch, which had also worked in somewhat more closely to the Jersey side, turned her prow so as to intercept the other craft.

"Slam in more fuel!" sang out Steerforth. "Rush her! Rush her for all she's worth!"

Under the influence of this spurt, the pursuers drew so far abeam that it became evident to those on the tug that they would be cut off from shore. Bob, who was manipulating the searchlight, turned it on again.

As the tug came within focus, scarcely a hundred yards away, two shots rang out over the water. Steerforth saw the young ferret flinch for an instant, then crouch behind the low bulwarks of the bow.

"Lie low, men!" he commanded. "They have got rifles aboard that craft. Are you hit, Bob?"

"They barked my shoulder. But it is only a scratch. Pass me that Winchester, Lieutenant."

A moment later a blaze of fire leaped from the bow of the launch, that was followed by a cry from the pilot box of the tug.

"I've winged their pilot," remarked Bob, calmly.

Not a sign of life was visible on the launch. Now that they were away from the city lights, the launch itself was only a vague shadow to those on board the tug. Steerforth could manipulate the helm without showing himself over the side.

The pilot box of the tug, however, being high up and in full view, was absolutely untenable under a rifle fire. Being completely open to the rear and half open in front, its occupants were conspicuous marks.

Hardly, however, had the tug began to swing around with the current when another man sprang up the steps and seized the wheel. He crouched low and endeavored to shelter himself, but when Bob proceeded to pump three balls, one after another, in his direction, he gave a yell and sprang down below.

Shouts and curses were sent at the shadowy, relentless pursuer. Then came a fusillade of bullets. Several pierced the side of the launch. One of the men plugged the holes with wads of oakum.

A second volley smashed the lantern in the bow, severed the wire bearing the electric current, and quenched the all-revealing light.

"Close in on her," said Steerforth. "This is bad luck, boys, but we must keep her in sight."

Yells of triumphant defiance arose from the tug, which was now a vague shadow, all her lights having been put out some time before.

"She is making for the Jersey shore," called Bob from the bow, in guarded tones. "We rather lost ground while the firing was going on."

Speed was put on again, and when the tug passed athwart the course of the

launch, not more than sixty yards intervened between the two craft.

But the tug had the lead, and was making squarely for the cliffs, now not far away.

"Rush her, boys!" urged Steerforth. "As we get under the shadow of the banks she will be less visible than ever. Hang the luck! Pity our light was smashed."

After that the arms were carefully distributed. The four pursuers felt that a desperate struggle might be at hand. The crooks would fight resolutely, as in case of capture long terms at Sing Sing, and possibly a seat in the death chair, would almost inevitably be the result, for some of them, at least.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TOUGH TUSSLE.

There were no lights visible near the locality approached by the tug to make a landing. Everything was wrapped in profound shadow.

Those in the launch heard the tug's engine stop. The motion of her propeller ceased.

"They've run aground, or struck a wharf," whispered Bob.

"I wish we could see better. But we are almost up with them. There—there! Are we not passing the tug?"

"Yes. Push on, Steerforth. She is deserted."

The tug's furnace still glowed, but not a sign of life was on her, as far as could be seen when the launch rushed by. Owing to the lighter draft of water the police boat could approach nearer the shore.

"We must certainly be gaining on them now," remarked one of the policemen. "They had to jump over in three feet of water and carry the girl and the swag."

"What is that?" Steerforth pointed to some dim objects wading ashore. "It's they, boys."

He gave the launch's rudder a twist that sent it among the splashing group of cursing and struggling thieves.

At this juncture Bob, happening to glance back, saw the vague outline of the tug moving off. At first he doubted, but with the doubt came an idea of a probable ruse on the part of the thieves to save the plunder, if not themselves.

"Overboard after them, boys!" cried the lieutenant, setting the example of plunging into the water himself, revolver in hand.

The keel of the launch grated just then. All but Bob leaped out into two feet of water. The launch drew only twenty inches loaded, and presently slipped off the rock her keel had grazed, just as the young ferret had made up his mind on a plan of action.

Steam being still up, he sprang to the wheel. When Steerforth gave the rudder that last twist, he brought it around with a broad sheer to port, that caused the boat to now point more toward the river than the shore.

Each one of the stalwart policemen now had a struggling man in his grasp. Shots were fired in the darkness.

"I don't hear any girl's voice," thought Bob. "I must be right, though Clara and the plunder are not here. I must follow on alone."

By this time the launch under his steady hand was pointed toward the receding tug.

"Go for 'em, Steerforth!" cried the lad, his blood thrilling with a fierce desire for combat. Then, to himself, "I'd like to be with them, but my duty lies yonder."

He left the wheel for an instant, threw some coal into the still teeming furnace, then sprang back to his post.

Out into the river again sped the two boats, the launch now gaining so fast that the dark lines of the tug grew into clear relief against the background of water and sky.

"That furnace is good for five or ten minutes without more fuel," he thought. "I do hope I can overhaul her in that time."

It was now evident that the tug did not progress so well as she had done before. Doubtless those among the thieves who understood working an engine had leaped overboard when the tug grounded.

As for the launch, she almost steered herself, and the well-regulated machinery fulfilled its appointed task to perfection.

Nearer—nearer drew the pursuing boat, with its single occupant. On board the tug passing glimpses of some one shoveling coal into the furnace could be seen. How many were there Bob did not know. He sat grasping the wheel, with two revolvers on the thwart at his side, and his ready Winchester leaning against the dashboard abaft the engine.

As Bob felt the nose of his boat rub the quarter of the tug near the stern, some one sprang up with a boat-pole.

"Down with you or I fire!" shouted Bob.

An oath was the only reply, as the pole was set against the bow of the tug. But before the man could apply his strength the boy ferret had leveled his pistol and fired.

More execrations followed, but the man fell back into the hold of the tug and the pole drifted away in the darkness.

Some one else now appeared from the tug's cabin, but before he could attempt anything, Bob saw Clara's form rise up. Then the girl leaned far over the tug's side and grasped the bow of the launch.

"Let go of that!" shouted a coarse, heavy voice.

"Gopher Pete!" said Bob to himself, at the same time springing like a deer to the bow of his own craft.

The girl was clinging and screaming. The launch, thus held, still rubbed against the tug. Gopher Pete at this instant stooped over and seized Clara by the throat. But he never had the chance to more than half close his fingers.

Brooklyn Bob struck him on the skull with a heavy pistol butt, springing at the same time on board the tug.

The two rolled together in the bottom of the tug's hold, while Clara released her grasp on the launch, which, still under a full head of steam, shot ahead, glanced off into the darkness, and soon disappeared.

Gopher Pete's head was a hard one. No sooner had he struck the flooring of the hold than he grasped Bob in a pair of arms that in point of strength might have been likened to a bear's.

But if Pete was strong, Bob was active and wiry. He twisted away from the furious grasps and hugs made by his huge adversary, wondering the while if any more of the rascals would come to Pete's assistance.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CROOK'S DYING CRY.

The struggle was short and desperate. In that close, deadly gripping, weapons were lost. Bob had all he could do to keep himself from being throttled or crushed. Indeed, only a lad of supreme nerve and agility could have withstood the attack of such a muscular and heavy a man as Pete, who, seeing his last chance for liberty escaping, was using his utmost energies to down the one more responsible than all others for bringing the noted crook into such mortal jeopardy.

Sometimes one was on top; sometimes another. All the time Pete was grasping

at Bob's windpipe or striving to crush the boy in his arms. Bob, on his part, besides eluding as best he could the deadly effect Pete's oaths were both numerous and deep, as he felt himself so long withstood by one whom he had thought himself able to smash into insensibility at a blow.

He finally attempted to release himself, and so far succeeded as to raise himself to a half-kneeling posture, with one knee on Bob's chest. A huge, hairy hand now closed on Bob's throat. Pete, with the other, drew a slung shot from his bosom.

Bob felt his head swim. Stars danced in his eyes; something rattled like the roar of Broadway in his ears. A band as of steel seemed to be cutting into his neck on all sides, and a deathly pain shot down his spine. Yet, though half senseless, he nerved himself for one last effort.

Then the motion of the tug overcame Pete's equilibrium, and Bob twisted himself to one side so swiftly, yet surely, that the burly ruffian was thrown back against the side of the tug. Before he could recover for another rush on the almost exhausted, yet undiscouraged lad, a pistol was thrust before his eyes.

By the glow from the furnace Gopher Pete saw that he was looking into the muzzle of a revolver held by Clara. The girl was standing between him and Bob, who was now rising. She was disheveled and her dress was torn. Her hair hung down in wild disarray.

"Yet an unrelenting purpose gleamed in her eye. It was a determination to blow Pete's brains out unless he instantly surrendered."

Pete himself, looking up into her eyes, saw clearly that if he made a single move he was a dead man, provided her aim was true. As the pistol was not two feet from his head, it was hardly possible for him to miss feeling a ball in his head should she fire.

"Don't—don't you move!" she screamed, half stutteringly; yet there was a world of menace in the shrill quiver of her voice.

"All right—I won't," quoth Pete, keeping very still. "What's the use?"

"Very little, I should say, just at present."

As Brooklyn Bob spoke he snapped a pair of stylish police bracelets over Pete's wrists, then turned to examine the fellow who had fallen under his fire and had tumbled into the after-hold.

It was the Dodger.

Bob then turned, and, grasping Clara by the hand, thanked her for the opportune way in which she had come to his aid.

"Had you not held Pete up," he said, "the rascal might have done for me in the end."

At this juncture a loud hissing arose at the boiler. Bob, suddenly roused to a new consideration of safety, sprang to the safety valve. To his horror the indicator pointed to the zero mark.

Bob was not much of an engineer, but the unusual manifestations now going on about the engine, and the low marking of the indicator, made him aware that all the water in the boiler was being converted into steam.

In the hurry of pursuit a proper supply of water had not been kept up. The overheated furnace also added to the imminence of the catastrophe now at hand.

Bob sprang back and seized Clara. Then he saw a large grip by the side of the Dodger's body. Hardly realizing what he was doing, and inspired only by a desire to seize something that would float, he took up the grip in one hand. His other arm was around Clara.

"What's up?" growled Pete. "D'ey ain't no one else aboard?"

Bob, inspired by a sudden consciousness of Pete's helplessness as he lay there handcuffed, was about to spring to his

side and remove the bracelets. Even so hardened a wretch as Pete, thought the lad, should have a fighting chance for his life under present circumstances.

But as he made the move Clara screamed. Then a great flame shot out at the furnace door. Bob knew what was coming next.

"Cling to me!" he shouted to Clara, and with grip in one hand, and with the other holding to her, he sprang overboard, having first cast a large oar into the water.

Even as he leaped the sullen crash of escaping steam arose into a mighty roar. The boiler flew upward in fragments. The hull of the tug fell apart and a sudden brief blaze illuminated the river, far and wide.

Bob managed to grasp the oar, and urged Clara to exert herself.

After the first shock of the explosion, she recovered sufficiently to cling to the oar and suffered Bob to assist in keeping her afloat. He never released the grip, having the while a vague remembrance of once seeing Pete on the tug's cabin roof hugging the same article, as if it was valuable.

By the time the crook's dying cry had ceased to mingle with the noise of the explosion, fragments of the wreck were falling about the two survivors.

CHAPTER XX.

BROOKLYN BOB'S BIG TALLY.

Then the terrifying sounds ceased. A great darkness came over the two, who were fortunately uninjured.

Presently they saw the stars overhead through the dissolving clouds of smoke and steam. The land on either side looked like a vague distant wall. It seemed to be miles away.

"How do you feel, Miss Slade?" asked Bob, supporting her and aiding the buoyancy of the overtaxed oar by treading water himself.

"I feel cold in body, yet relieved in mind."

Something was washed by the gentle action of the waves against Bob's back. He found that it was a portion of the tug's hull.

"Hello!" said he. "This is a god-send. Let me help you up."

In a few minutes both he and Clara were seated on a large fragment of the wreck, with the grip between them.

"We will not have to stay here very long," said the boy. "The explosion must have been both seen and heard by some craft on this always crowded part of the river. I wonder where the launch could have gone?"

Nothing could be seen of any light that looked like the launch's furnace.

"She may blow up, too," remarked Bob. "But there is no one aboard. I am sorry for Gopher Pete, though he and the Dodger richly deserved all they got."

The night air now felt cold, though the air was balmy enough to people in dry clothing. But in Clara's drenched condition she soon began to shiver violently.

Bob made her put on his coat, despite her reluctance at depriving him of its doubtful warmth, now that it was soaked through. After that she was more comfortable. He gritted his teeth and made out the best he could.

While waiting for rescue came mutual explanations between them as to the way these various happenings had been brought about.

"How did the gang come to separate?" asked Bob.

"You mean when they saw that you were about to overtake us?"

"Yes. I thought they would have stuck together. They outnumbered us two to one. In a square fight out here where

there is little chance of outside help, they stood a good chance to win."

"The agreement was for them all to stick together," said the girl. "But I think Pete and the Dodger had some secret understanding. When the tug ran aground, very gently, and the others jumped out, I was held back. They told me if I screamed again that they would kill me then and there."

"Pete kept possession of the bag and the Dodger held me down. Then they pushed the tug off as soon as you passed them in pursuit of those who were wading ashore."

"Why did Pete cling to this bag?" and Bob, as he spoke, laid his hand on the grip.

"I think it contains their booty, though I did not see the contents. They were very careful about it, and Pete, who was their leader in time of trouble, took charge of it mostly. I guess he thought that if he and the Dodger got away with it, while the police were busy capturing the others, it would be better than for all hands to give up—better for those two, at least."

"As it has turned out, it seems to have been worse."

"Yes; thanks to your boldness and sagacity."

"Well, Miss Clara, some of the glory belongs to you. If you had not held on to the launch's bow I could not have got on board, perhaps. Then, again, if you had not presented that pistol at Pete's head he might have bested me, after all."

"I do not believe that. But I am glad I was able to help a little. I ought to help all I can, for the whole pursuit was in my behalf."

"And that of justice. But what is that light yonder?"

Bob arose to his feet and scanned, as best he could, a clear, yellow light that was shining from the direction of the Jersey shore. After a time he said:

"I think it is coming directly toward us. That is what makes its progress so difficult to detect. It is getting larger slowly."

As the light approached a great shadow heaved into view behind it. Then a green light appeared. No noise of engine could be heard, however.

"It is a sailing vessel," said Bob. "The breeze is so light that she moves very slow."

When the craft forged slowly alongside, Bob called loudly. A reply came hoarsely over the water, then a boat was lowered and the two wrecked survivors taken on board.

The vessel was a coasting schooner from Connecticut that had taken a load of lumber to Newburg. She was to touch at one of the West Side piers, and therefore our two young people would be able to land.

They were made comfortable by the captain in the cabin before a warm stove, and had some supper. An hour or two later they were landed in safety. Bob gave the schooner people five dollars for their trouble, and soon Clara and himself were on the way to the boarding house kept by Mrs. Ames.

"Suppose we see what that grip really contains," said Clara, as they rattled through the deserted streets in a cab.

"All right," and Bob proceeded to open it with one of his skeleton keys. "Goodness! Look there, Miss Clara!"

A flash of shimmering light was emitted as he undid a chamois-skin bag that was the first thing he saw.

"Grandfather's diamonds!" exclaimed the girl. "But how wet everything is."

"Yes, but they can be dried. See here! There are a great many papers, besides bundles of banknotes and gold. I guess this bag must hold about all the plunder those rascals had obtained."

"I feel that we are very fortunate in getting it all back. I certainly owe much to your skill and bravery, Brooklyn Bob." Clara took the lad's hand in her's as she spoke.

"Oh, that's all right," assured Bob, carelessly. "But about this grip. You had better let me take it to your grandfather's lawyer just as it is. It will be safe there, and the things can be dried and identified."

Clara assented. At Mrs. Ames's door they rang the bell at three o'clock in the morning. The landlady herself answered the call, and stared in amazement at the two bedraggled, yet cheerful, figures on the steps.

Explanations ensued, in the midst of which old Zero appeared, who had heard Clara's voice as he lay awake, grieving over her absence.

The girl was taken to her room after a warm welcome. Brooklyn Bob re-entered the cab and drove to his own rooms, where he quickly dressed himself in dry clothing; then, taking the grip, he sought the house of old Mr. Slade's lawyer.

That worthy was also astonished at sight of the young detective, but also greatly pleased when he saw what the grip contained. Bob briefly told his tale, took the lawyer's receipt for the grip and its contents; then made his way, still in the same cab, to the police station, where Lieutenant Steerforth had his headquarters.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST OF THE WILLY WALLYS.

Here Bob found Mousing Mike, and also several cells full of prisoners obtained in the raid, which had been promptly made on Skilly Jack's place in accordance with Bob's written instructions. Among others was Flippy Kate, looking very forlorn and penitent.

"You won't forget what you said, I hope," said she to Bob. "I told you all I knew, you remember."

"All right. I won't forget you, Kitty. But you must give all the crooks the go-by in future."

Kate cried a little when she heard of the Dodger's death, but she looked chipper enough in the police court in the morning.

Steerforth and his men had also returned with several other captives. Later on the launch was picked up, having run aground on the Jersey side, and was no worse for the singular experience it had undergone.

Bob turned over to the authorities all the proofs which he had collected regarding the murder. Later on he was sent for to go to the office of Mr. Slade's lawyer.

After that he hurried to the boarding-house of Mrs. Ames, and she was soon seated facing Clara, who, in a trim mourning gown, and with a rich color in her face, seemed none the worse for her recent alarming experiences.

"I have some news for you," said the young ferret. "You remember speaking to me about a certain nephew of Mr. Slade's who ran away from him years ago when he was a small boy."

"Well, the lawyer has ascertained from the contents of that grip, added to certain other papers of your grandfather's in his possession, that this same nephew was no other than Dot the Dodger."

Clara's face grew pale; then her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Are you sure that this is so?" she asked.

"There appears to be no doubt of it. It seems that young Slade—for such was his real name—always retained possession of some letters which he was known to have when formerly with your grandfather. There were sundry photographs, too—in short, he was your cousin, and Mr. Slade's nephew."

"Poor Lewis!" sighed the girl. "I feel so sorry."

"Yes, but it cannot be helped. This, too, accounts more fully for the familiarity displayed by the gang who were responsible for your grandfather's death, and also relieves Kate Clower largely of the suspicion she was under of having aided them in their awful work. Young Slade was, of course, perfectly familiar with the place and with Mr. Slade's peculiar ways and views."

It may be said in conclusion that the captured Willy Wallys were convicted and sentenced to terms of various lengths in State's Prison.

The two principals, Pete and the Dodger, had already paid the last great penalty of their terrible crime.

That Brooklyn Bob received a generous reward for his work may be well assumed, but, after all, the most exhilarating reward was the satisfaction of having scored another big hit in the game for glory.

In the distribution of rewards, of course Mousing Mike and Steerforth were not forgotten.

Clara Slade inherited her grandfather's wealth, and occasionally she wears some of the diamonds that were the prime cause of such perilous experiences.

Of Brooklyn Bob she once said:

"That boy is a wonder! What will he achieve when he becomes a man?"

THE END.

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